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THE CHARADE MUST GO ON

GARRY KASPAROV
on Putin's election
spectacle

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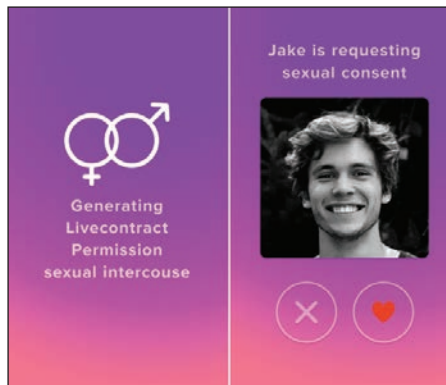
The Next Best Thing to Dating a Lawyer

The #MeToo and #TimesUp movements have sparked a major reconsideration of appropriate behavior between the sexes, both inside the workplace and outside of it. Perhaps it was only a matter of time before tech entrepreneurs, the geniuses who brought you Soylent food substitute and the Yelp-for-people rating app Peeples, would rush into the marketplace with a proposed solution to this problem as well.

The *New York Times* reports that apps with names like “LegalFling” can now provide instant, live contracts for people who sense an amorous encounter is about to unfold. The app, which legal experts note is a “documentation of intent” rather than an official contract, markets itself as helping discussion of consent happen in a “fun but clear way,” as its website describes. Such fun and easy discussions might include “condom use, bondage, dirty talk, sexting: The app lets users set their boundaries before an encounter—boundaries that can be adjusted at any time with a tap and shared with a potential partner,” the *Times* notes.

Imagine the possibilities as a date goes off the rails! Instead of an awkward face-to-face conversation about your feelings, you can simply tap-tap away on your consent app, surreptitiously applying a new layer of restrictions about what might happen on the walk home. The app obviously

sacrifices spontaneity for legalese—but it also encourages a depressingly pessimistic view of dating: The *Times* notes that the app allows users a one-



A screenshot from LegalFling

tap option for “triggering cease-and-desist letters.”

But apps such as LegalFling reflect a genuine problem in relationships between the sexes today: a deep confusion about what consent means. The *Times*’s “gender editor” Jessica Bennett recently used the paper’s MeToo newsletter to put out a call to college students to help the *Times* understand what she calls “gray-zone sex.” This is not, as the name suggests, a series about the surprising sex lives of the *Times*’s geriatric readers. “Gray-zone sex” is, according to Bennett, a way to describe our “ambiguous” sexual moment; it is “a particular kind of sexual encounter,

one that may not be viewed as ‘sexual assault,’ but that constitutes something far murkier and more troubling than simply a ‘bad date.’”

In other words: Think of LegalFling and the other consent apps likely to come to market as Antioch apps—after Antioch College’s 1990s-era Sexual Offense Prevention Policy that required students at the school to give verbal consent to any and every physical interaction, every time one might occur. As the *New York Times* recently noted, the old Antioch policy (which was correctly and thoroughly mocked when it debuted) evidently no longer speaks to the post-MeToo moment and itself is being even more radically revised: “The current crop of pioneers at Antioch are moving the conversation beyond sex to discussions of consent in platonic touch,” the *Times* reported. What does this look like in practice? The reporter talked to a student at Antioch who, after three years thoroughly marinating in Antioch’s consent policy, was shocked when someone came up and gave her an unsolicited hug. The person was her mother. “If you don’t want to be touched and your mom wants to hug you, you should be allowed to say no,” the student said. “It’s about having autonomy over your own body.”

Unfortunately, there’s not yet an app for encouraging a less paranoid approach to human interaction. ♦

Equal Opportunity Ink

THE SCRAPBOOK has plenty of prejudices but no official position, pro or con, on tattoos. We sometimes wonder if their explosive popularity over the last two decades evinces the angst of a declining middle class, but the appearance of tattoos on one’s skin doesn’t signify the quality of one’s character any more than their absence does. Some of



our worst enemies have no tattoos.

On the matter of interpreting the social significance of tats, though, the *New York Times* is, as ever, way ahead of us. A recent headline: “Anchors Away: How Women Are Redrawing the Tattoo Parlor.” This is of course the reporting approach for which the paper has become famous: Take any topic ordinary people might be interested in and view it through the lens of racial,

COURTESY OF NICE TATTOO PARLOR

sexual, gender, or class prejudice.

That, and set the piece in Brooklyn, where they found a female-run parlor called Nice Tattoo. Its décor is airy and sunlit, and while it “welcomes all genders” (surely the author meant “both”? oh, forget it), “women make up the majority of its clients.”

The tattoo business, we learn, “remains an overwhelmingly male-dominated one: Just one in six tattooers is female, according to a 2010 study by Columbia University.” (How encouraging to know accomplished scholars are tackling these questions.) “The industry had been both historically male dominated and continues to be very heteronormative for men,” explains Margot Mifflin, a professor at City University of New York and the author of *Bodies of Subversion: A Secret History of Women and Tattoo*. “Tattoo reality shows have been dominated by men, and commercial magazines are still unabashedly, laughably sexist, often with the pretense of being edgy.”

Clever readers will have noted the allusion in the paper’s headline. A century ago the typical tattoo was an anchor on the meaty arm of a sailor. Popeye had one, if we remember. And, speaking only for ourselves, we prefer the older anchor look—heteronormative though it may be. ♦

Schools for Scandal

The *Washington Post* recently reported a “sharp reversal” in the expected graduation rates for Washington, D.C., public schools after heading upwards in recent years. Only “42 percent of seniors attending traditional public schools are on track to graduate.” What happened? Mainly, it seems, officials have stopped lying. The rate had been climbing handsomely in recent years—but that’s because school officials, some now under FBI investigation, were inflating the numbers.

“Last year, only 178 out of 2,307 graduates from all DCPS high schools had satisfactory attendance. Almost half of DCPS students who missed more than half of the school year graduated last year,” notes Max Eden,

a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute. The federal investigation reportedly centers on Ballou High School (see “Unearned Diplomas,” by Eden and Alice B. Lloyd, in our January 1 issue), where the graduation rate made the improbable leap from 57 percent to 100 percent in just a year.

Another recent *Washington Post* report found that half of the students at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, which has a nationally recognized theater and arts program, may not even live in D.C. It would seem the city’s poorest kids are losing out in school lotteries so that rich kids from the Maryland suburbs with politically connected parents can attend one of

the city’s few well-regarded public schools for free.

Spending on D.C. public schools in recent years has run upwards of \$29,000 per pupil, in addition to another \$120 million in private philanthropy that has been poured into the system since 2007. Whatever staggering problems D.C. schools have, a shortage of resources is not among them.

It’s good to see the *Washington Post* find room among its denunciations of Betsy DeVos, Trump’s education secretary, for some fine stories (belatedly) covering the corruption problems in D.C. public schools. And it’s a timely reminder for liberal critics of DeVos



that her passion for charter schools and school vouchers is no threat to America's children. These reforms are a lifeline to children trapped in unaccountable and corrupt public schools, which are sadly not a phenomenon unique to D.C. ♦

Obit Dicta

The question of who deserves an obituary has long vexed editors at newspapers and magazines. Should they limit themselves to the most well-known public figures or dig deep into the less well-known but often fascinating lives of the hoi polloi? Do you cover the lives of the notoriously awful as well as the virtuous? And what tone should a writer take toward a controversial figure?

Answers to such questions could be found in the many books written by professional obituarists; titles such as *The Dead Beat* (Marilyn Johnson), *Obit* (Jim Sheeler), and *Find the Good* (Heather Lende) offer sage advice about how best to offer as ecumenical an obituary section as possible.

But the *New York Times* evidently decided to consult its social justice conscience for an answer. The result, just in time for Women's History Month, is a lavish project called "Overlooked," whose opening salvo says it all: "Since 1851, obituaries in the *New York Times* have been dominated by white men. Now, we're adding the stories of 15 remarkable women."

If 15 feels like a measly postmortem mea culpa, at least readers can be reassured that the paper's gender editors and correspondents have made retroactively rooting out sexism a full-time job. "We'll be adding to this collection each week," the editor's note says, "as Overlooked becomes a regular feature in the obituaries section." Among the first 15 ladies selected are Ida B. Wells, Sylvia

Plath, and Ada Lovelace—all worthy choices, to be sure.

And yet it's clear this project isn't only about celebrating important dead women; it's about the *Times* flagellating itself for its past lack of wokeness. In a piece outlining the old obituary selection process, William McDonald (Warning: He's a white male!), the *Times* obit editor since 2006, noted, "Sometimes we choose a subject in part to represent a group whose contributions were forgotten or ignored." He cited a past obituary of Violet Cowden, a Women Airforce Service pilot during World War II, as an example.

But token Violets are not enough these days, and McDonald's piece, which reads like a forced confession, wrestles with the question of why so many dead white men littered his pages. Is their dominance evidence of "conscious or unconscious bias"? He concedes that "perhaps" the paper's standards for selection "unfairly valued the achievements of the white, male mainstream over those of minorities and women who may have been more on the margins." Why not "more women and



Violet Cowden

people of color" and "why, for that matter, not more openly gay people, or transgender people?"

McDonald knows (or has been made to know by his gender editors): "Because relatively few of them were allowed to make such a mark on society in their own time. . . . The tables of power were crowded with white men; there were few seats for anyone else."

There's no harm in casting a wider net when it comes to honoring the dead, of course, but we could do without the social justice scolding to go along with it. Obituaries, the Overlooked editors write, are "a stark lesson in how society valued various achievements and achievers." They are also a reminder that even death can't protect you from ideological nonsense. ♦

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Rogue Rage

I don't agree with him on that one," my stepmother said. "It was wrong, and I don't think he should have done it." Usually she took my father's side in these discussions. Not this time.

My father owned a small motel on the South Carolina coast for 15 years or so. He sold it in the 1990s, but for years he would tell us harrowing and uproarious stories. Owning and managing a small inn is harder, I reckon, even than running a restaurant. The motel never closes. The guests, with all their strange habits and idiotic demands, never leave. There were 77 rooms. Something can go wrong at any time, day or night, and you can never fully depend on the people you hire to keep watch while you're away.

Dad was in extremely poor health before he died in February, and he was unable to talk for long, but one memory seemed almost to give him his old strength. Four unchaperoned 18-year-olds checked into the motel. Already this was against policy, which required chaperones for anyone 21 or younger (it was advertised as a "family motel"). But the boys' parents made the reservation and checked them in, then left them on their own. "Some time after midnight," dad said, "they'd gotten pretty drunk and started hollering and making a racket and firing off bottle rockets." The night manager phoned to say that guests were complaining about some crazy drunk boys screaming and threatening people.

Dad was mostly a peaceable man, but in those days he could be provoked to rage. He arrived at the motel early the next morning and stormed into the boys' room. It reeked of alco-

hol and smoke and there was a sizable hole in one of the walls and ash burns on the upholstery. They were all there, asleep. He ripped the covers off their beds and told them to get out and get off the premises, they weren't welcome there, and he'd already called the police to ensure they left without inci-



dent. "One of them wanted a refund for the two or three more days they'd paid for. I told them no, hell no, they weren't getting a refund, now goodbye." All this happened in 1986 or 1987, but I could see it still irritated my father to think his guests, the people who had entrusted themselves to his care, had been poorly treated.

The four boys piled their bags on the edge of the motel property and waited for a cab, but dad's rage wasn't spent. He approached them outside and kicked the pile of bags into the street.

In a few minutes, one of them came back into the office and said he'd left his wallet in the room. "I told him I

cleaned out the room myself and his wallet wasn't there. He said he wanted to go look for it himself, and I said hell no." By this time a police officer had arrived and my father agreed to let the officer, but not the boy, search the room for the wallet.

"But I knew he wouldn't find it," he said. "It was in my pocket."

I looked at him in shock. My stepmother groaned.

"Yessir. A couple hundred dollars in it. Credit cards too."

After the officer emerged from the room without the wallet, an argument ensued but to no result. The four boys had nothing to do but leave. They didn't quite leave, though, as my father remembered. They went across the street and waited for two or three hours. "I thought they were going to jump me," he told me. "But eventually they did leave."

What about the wallet? "I took the couple hundred dollars from it and put the money in our maintenance account, and got rid of the rest. Shredded the cards and burned it all." He said this defiantly, as if expecting an argument. I didn't argue, but he kept talking as if I had. "They'd torn that room up," he said. "A couple thousand dollars in damage. But that wasn't the worst of it. A horde of guests stormed out and said they'd never stay there again. These were people who'd been coming a long time, and they weren't coming back."

"That money wasn't yours to take," my stepmother said.

"That's my point," dad wheezed. "It was mine to take."

She said they had argued about this many times before. I guess he was wrong, but I can't help admiring him for still caring about those guests, 30 years later. The four boys must be in their fifties now. I wonder what they'd say.

BARTON SWAIM

Action Deferred

Now, I know some people want me to bypass Congress and change the laws on my own. And believe me, right now dealing with Congress—believe me—believe me, the idea of doing things on my own is very tempting. . . . But that's not how—that's not how our system works. That's not how our democracy functions. That's not how our Constitution is written.

—Barack Obama, July 25, 2011

In the summer of 2012, when President Obama created the program known as DACA—Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals—he called it a “temporary stop-gap measure.” He had promised not to circumvent Congress and impose a solution on his own authority, but the temptation was too great for him. With one executive order, his administration created, authorized, and implemented a program governing the resident status of undocumented adults who had come to the United States as children.

President Obama was right about the need to address the plight of hundreds of thousands of “dreamers,” as the sons and daughters of illegal immigrants are known. The term comes from the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, which was first introduced in 2001. (About 3.6 million immigrants fall into that category, though only about 800,000 are enrolled in the DACA program.) He had a fine moral case for action, but the action he settled on was flagrantly unconstitutional—as he himself had averred just a year before. As always, his strategy for negotiating a deal with a divided Congress was to hector and disdain his opposition and, when they proved recalcitrant, to make law by executive order.

We are still living with his “temporary” act of lawlessness in 2018. By pretending to fix the problem, Obama in essence obviated the need to solve it permanently, with the result that it remains unsolved.

Six months ago, the Trump administration announced that it would end the DACA program on March 5, 2018. It was an unpopular decision but the right one: The hope was that terminating the program—hence making nearly 800,000 dreamers once again vulnerable to deportation—would motivate Congress to find a permanent solution.

It might have worked, too. But what the administration hadn't counted on was the federal court system. On Janu-

ary 9, U.S. District Court Judge William Alsup granted a request by several California cities and the University of California system to stop the administration from phasing out the DACA program. The idea that the president has the authority to create immigration law by executive fiat but somehow doesn't have the authority to terminate what it created is the sort of legal inanity that gives progressive jurisprudence its unenviable reputation.

The Justice Department asked the Supreme Court to rule on the case directly, but the court denied the request on February 26, meaning the case must now go through the lib-

eral-friendly Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. This will take months. The Supreme Court will then likely rule in the administration's favor, but the case won't be heard until the Court is back in session in October and a decision wouldn't be handed down until early 2019.

The California plaintiffs mean well, just as Obama meant well in 2012. But the consequence of their do-gooderism has been to let



A pointless protest since the judiciary intervened

Congress put the problem off again and again. The Trump administration's March 5 deadline came and went, and so those 800,000 noncitizen Americans must soldier on, not knowing if they belong to the country of their youth and adulthood—the United States—or some other country with which they have little or no experience. The great majority of these young people are productive and law-abiding residents. One need not be an open-borders zealot to recognize the idiotic cruelty of the government's dithering.

The caucuses in both House and Senate were inching towards a deal before Judge Alsup's decision, and even after it there was hope for some compromise. But once it became clear that the deadline wasn't a real deadline—and particularly once the Parkland, Florida, shooting shoved every other issue out of the headlines—there was no chance for a deal.

The dreamers are once again the victims of irreconcilable political demands. The administration is happy to sign a deal giving them a path to citizenship, but it also demands a reduction in immigration levels and the abolition of the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program (a lottery that awards green cards to up to 50,000 foreigners per year). Immigration restrictionists in the House GOP, meanwhile, demand a substantial increase to border security. None of

MARK WILSON / GETTY

these demands is unreasonable, but Democrats in the House and Senate have concluded—probably correctly—that the lack of resolution on the issue gives them an advantage in the midterm elections. They’re demanding a bill extending DACA and including a path to citizenship, with only modest increases in border security, something they cannot get.

In short: no deal, and no real possibility of a deal. The GOP leaders in the House and Senate, we’re told, have concluded that the votes aren’t there for a permanent DACA solution. Other issues clamor for attention, especially gun-related bills, and gone is any patience for a DACA compromise.

There is some hope that lawmakers can merely extend the DACA program for one or perhaps two or three years, by attaching an amendment to the forthcoming omnibus spending bill. That bill must be signed into law by March 23 to avoid another government shutdown. A DACA extension would be a more sensible and humane solution than simply letting the Supreme Court rule on the legal matter of whether the administration can terminate the program if it wishes to. That ruling will mean hundreds of thousands of residents—productive and law-abiding people—will suddenly be in fear of deportation to a country they barely remember, or don’t remember at all.

Virtually no one in Congress wishes the dreamers to be deported. But their not wishing it won’t prevent it from happening. If Congress does nothing and the Supreme Court agrees with the administration, the DACA program will terminate. We will be right back where we were on January 8 before the California judge butted in.

Much of this problem is the direct result of Barack Obama’s impatience with the American political system. He could not abide the sluggish pace and untidiness of deliberative democracy and had to fix the problem by the force of his will. But that’s not how our democracy functions, and that’s not how our Constitution is written. ♦

The Farrakhan Question

‘**T**he powerful Jews are my enemy,” remarked Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan at his organization’s annual “Saviours’ Day” celebration in Chicago on February 25. That was just one of several of his choice anti-Semitic tropes. Another one, oddly stated in the third person: “The FBI has been the worst enemy of black advancement. Can you prove that, Farrakhan? You see, the Jews have control over those agencies of government.” With the exception of CNN’s Jake Tap-

per, hardly anyone in the mainstream media seemed to notice or care.

Farrakhan’s anti-Jewish rhetoric has a long history and is well known. In 1984, for instance, he said, “Hitler was a very great man” and, in 1985, “Don’t you forget, when it’s God who puts you in the ovens, it’s forever.” What’s far less known about Farrakhan is the warmth with which he’s embraced by influential members of the American progressive movement.

Tamika Mallory, a co-president of the Women’s March, was at the “Saviours’ Day” speech this year; two years before, she posted a photo with Farrakhan on Instagram in which she offered him praise and birthday wishes. Linda Sarsour—the left-wing Palestinian-American activist and feminist provocateur—commented on a photo of Farrakhan on the Instagram page of Carmen Perez, the treasurer of the Women’s March. “God bless him,” Sarsour said of the Nation of Islam leader.

How strange that these self-proclaimed “intersectional” feminists would support an openly misogynistic and racist demagogue like Farrakhan. Among his more recent offerings: “When a woman does not know how to cook and the right foods to cook, she’s preparing death for herself, her husband, and her children.” He’s also observed that “man is supposed to have rule, especially in his own house . . . and when she rules you, you become her child.” Directly to women he cried: “You are a failure if you can’t keep a man, no profession can keep you happy!” We wonder just what it is about him that these feminists find so alluring.

More troubling is the photo that recently surfaced of a 2005 Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) meeting with Farrakhan. It featured Illinois’s rookie senator, Barack Obama, smiling broadly at Farrakhan’s side. The photographer, Askia Muhammad, says the CBC asked him to suppress the image because it might have derailed Obama’s presidential aspirations. Nor is that the only time CBC members hobnobbed with Farrakhan: As Jeryl Bier pointed out in the *Wall Street Journal* in January, several of them can be seen shaking hands with Farrakhan or hugging him in a 2009 YouTube video.

We doubt the photo with Farrakhan would have hurt Obama, who easily weathered revelations of his long association with the anti-Semitic and anti-American preacher Jeremiah Wright. What’s troubling is that the preponderance of mainstream journalists are happy to look the other way. We suspect that if a photo emerges some day of George W. Bush grinning with Richard Spencer or David Duke, the *New York Times* will have room for it on page A1.

On March 4, CBC member Danny K. Davis (D-Ill.) defended his relationship with Farrakhan by remarking that “the world is so much bigger than Farrakhan and the Jewish question and his position on that and so forth.” That phrase, “the Jewish question,” rings a bell. Where have we heard that before? ♦

FRED BARNES

Here's a Deal Trump Doesn't Love

Last September, the big hats in the political hierarchy of New York and New Jersey spent an hour at the White House with President Trump. They were seeking a pile of money to pay for a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River connecting northern New Jersey and Manhattan.

The cost would be an astronomical \$30 billion. The states wanted Trump to sign off on a deal under which the federal government would pay half the tab. That wasn't all. The feds would also provide a loan covering 45 percent of the cost. The states would be obliged to pay what's left out of their own pockets.

It was a big ask. So when the delegation departed, Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), the Senate minority leader, stayed behind to make the case for Trump's support one-on-one. That was probably a mistake, but not the only one.

Schumer and Trump, both New Yorkers, have known each other for years and got along peaceably. When Trump was a Democrat, he gave money to Schumer's campaigns. Now Trump is a Republican of sorts, and they're enemies. Schumer's specialty is blocking nominees to the Trump administration. The president likes to humiliate Schumer any way he can, particularly on Senate votes.

In late February, Trump let it be known he opposes federal funding of the tunnel, formally known as the Gateway Program. There was no actual announcement from the White House. The president merely instructed Speaker Paul Ryan to cut a \$900 million earmark from a \$1 trillion omnibus House spending bill.

That proposed expenditure had been slipped into the legislation by Rodney P. Frelinghuysen, the chairman of

the Appropriations Committee. He's a Republican, but what's more important is he's from New Jersey. There was no matching earmark in the Senate.

Democrats assumed Trump's decision was political payback: The president didn't want Schumer to benefit from anything he did. Chances are that sentiment played a part in Trump's decision, but only a part.



Officials in the Department of Transportation scoured the agency for a contract obligating the parties or any agreement to share costs. They found zilch.

There's a lot more to the tunnel issue than Trump.

Politicians, transportation officials, and the media in New York and New Jersey have been promoting the new tunnel for years. They make a pretty good case. It goes like this: The two tubes of the rail tunnel under the Hudson are badly aging, and if one has to shut down for repairs, there will be hell to pay if a replacement isn't ready. Commerce, train service, indeed the economy of the entire Northeast would suffer.

After the White House session in September, Schumer and his entourage were optimistic the project would fall into place. The federal money would flow. New York and New Jersey would get the special treatment they were seeking. They'd hopscotch over other states eager for

federal funding of transportation projects. They were dreaming.

They should have known better from their experience with the Obama administration. In November 2015, Transportation secretary Anthony Foxx agreed to a tunnel deal in which the federal government would cover nearly all the costs with grants or loans. A "new federal commitment" to the Hudson tunnel project was announced in a press release.

Nothing came of it. There was no deal, only the press release. Some tunnel backers have claimed the "informal" agreement was binding on the federal government. But that didn't fly. Officials in the Department of Transportation—the Trump department—scoured the agency for a contract obligating the parties or any agreement to share costs. They found zilch.

But after the hour with Trump in September, hope returned, with little basis for it. "Just a few months ago, the idea once again appeared to have gained the support it needed in Washington and, once again, it looks as if one powerful official—in this case, the president—could put a stop to it," the *New York Times* reported.

Sure enough, that's now Trump's position. He is threatening to veto the entire spending measure if the money for the tunnel remains. Maybe this is just a bargaining position. However, that isn't the only impediment. There's the populist problem. Why should flyover states heavily subsidize a project of two of the richest states? Answer: They shouldn't. New York and New Jersey should pay more. Since 90 percent of the tunnel's commuters are expected to come from New Jersey, shouldn't that state pay a bigger share? Same answer.

Then there's the queue problem. The new tunnel is eligible for a Transportation Department program called New Starts. As of last week, 52 New

Starts projects were in line ahead of it. New York and New Jersey have shown no interest in getting in that line. They'd rather take the buttinski approach, which Frelinghuysen's earmark would, in effect, let them do. And by the way, the earmark would be a down payment, guaranteeing the rest of the federal bucks would follow.

Would the other 48 states stand by mutely as two big, brash, and bountiful states laugh at their expense all the way to the federal bank? I doubt it. And what about Trump's infrastructure program? Those projects

are supposed to be spread around the country, not concentrated in a few gigantic undertakings.

It's common in our political system to exaggerate the need for federal aid, to insist a crisis exists when it's only a serious problem. What prompts suspicion is the inactivity of the Obama administration after the agreement in November 2015. There were 14 months left in the Obama era. Yet a contract with the states wasn't signed, much less put in force.

Where was Schumer when nothing was happening? ♦

COMMENT ♦ CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

Italy: All roads lead to populism

Maybe not since the proto-Protestant radical Girolamo Savonarola was hanged and set on fire with two of his clerical accomplices in 1498 has Florence seen a weekend so filled with terrifying surprises and reversals of fortune. On Sunday morning, March 4, the city awoke to discover that Davide Astori, the 31-year-old captain of its beloved soccer team ACF Fiorentina, had died of cardiac arrest during the night.

The following afternoon, a 65-year-old man named Roberto Pirrone carried his gun onto a bridge planning to commit suicide, somehow changed his mind, and shot dead Idy Diene, one of the thousands of Senegalese street merchants who have migrated to Italy in recent years. Prosecutors ruled out racism as a motive, citing a suicide note the man had written his daughter and his lack of connection to any political groups. That did not stop a hundred young African men from marching through the center of town to the St. John Baptistery, across from the Duomo, smashing flowerpots and generally ripping the place up.

Sunday, March 4, was also election day. A son of Florence, the former mayor Matteo Renzi, was leading the Democratic Party (Pd), much renamed since the end of the Cold War but still recognizable as the Italian equivalent of our own Democrats. Renzi had once been seen as the Italian Bill Clin-



Renzi's party almost fell out of the political system altogether. Apart from a scattering of seats in the very far north, it had turned from a national party into a Tuscan party.

ton, who would reshape the center-left party as a business-friendly group for a new generation of voters. Business-friendly he was, but the voters never came. They repudiated Renzi in a referendum in December 2016 that would have given him more power.

But it was nothing like the slap he received this month. Renzi's party got

less than 19 percent of the vote. It had not only lost, it had almost fallen out of the political system altogether. Apart from a scattering of seats in the very far north, it had turned from a national party into a Tuscan party.

This was only the beginning of what Luciano Fontana, editor of the *Corriere della Sera*, called a political "earthquake." Renzi was bested by a three-party conservative coalition that included former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, who had dominated Italian politics for two decades until he was felled by sex scandals, judicial proceedings, and backroom maneuvers by the country's president. His coalition took 36 or 37 percent of the votes, twice as many as Renzi got. But by the end of election day it was no longer "his" coalition. Berlusconi, once tarred by bien-pensant Italians as an "extremist," a "virtual fascist," and even a "neo-conservative," is now seen as a relative moderate. He was expected to sweep up the lion's share of the conservative vote and use the more agitated parties to round out his coalition.

But his ally, the jovial, bearded Matteo Salvini of the League (Lega), blew him away. The League was founded towards the end of the Cold War by northern Italians determined to secede, convinced as they were that lazy Sicilians and Calabrians were leading the country to rack and ruin. Over time, the Northern League (as it was then called) also became Italy's premier anti-immigrant party. Whatever they did, though, they hovered in the single digits, sometimes rounding out a Berlusconi coalition. They got 4 percent in 2013. They got 17 percent this time. As immigration turned into a threat to the nation, the League came into their own as a national party, though their victories were virtually all north of Rome. Salvini promised to throw the book at criminals, to deport as many illegal aliens as he could find, and to legalize and tax prostitution. "Italians first" was his motto. Steve Bannon was on the scene for the victory.

The biggest single party was the half-serious Five Star Movement (M5S), founded a decade ago by an acerbic television comedian, Beppe

Grillo, and organized around the motto *Vaffanculo* (“Up yours”). It was as if Stephen Colbert had run for president and won, except that the party’s new top candidate, the pint-sized glad-hander Luigi Di Maio, turned out to have a very appealing way of promising the moon. M5S’s voters called the Italian government a “caste,” and for a long time they had an even lower opinion of the European government.

Now the “caste” is leaving the field. After his disappointing performance, Berlusconi did not appear for two days. Renzi held a press conference to offer an Al Franken-style resignation: that is, he talked about it, but he didn’t do it. It was as if Renzi had been told that making such a speech is what a politician does when he is disgraced but didn’t believe in his inmost heart that Italians would be able to tolerate public life without him. “We won’t form a government with extremists,” Renzi said. Problem is, the “extremists” now include almost all of the 81 percent who didn’t vote for Renzi.

Whether any functional government is possible for Italy right now is an open question. There is, in theory, a working majority that is opposed to the European Union. If you pieced together the M5S and the Lega with the third party in the right-wing coalition, Brothers of Italy (FdI), you could command a 53 percent majority in the chamber. The European Union is really not going over well now. Emma Bonino, a politician beloved of the press, ran on a party called More Europe (+Europa). That was good for 2.5 percent of the vote.

Politicians, though, tend to hate their rivals more than their enemies, and in the election’s aftermath the Lega’s Salvini ruled out working with the M5S. In a way, the two victorious Euroskeptical parties have been *too* successful. They’re the core of a new system in which *both* parties are what the old guard calls “populist.” The daily *Il Foglio* described best the new division in Italian politics: It pits those who are heartsick over unemployment against those who are heartsick over immigration. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PHILIP TERZIAN

Monumental excess: The mayor for life gets a statue

Like most American cities, Washington has been grappling lately with the issue of historic monuments and statuary, public and private, and whether they ought to be displaced and discarded. The good news this past week is that, in a departure from recent custom, a new statue—eight feet high, encased in bronze—was raised and dedicated in a place of honor along Pennsylvania Avenue. The bad news is that it’s a statue of Marion Barry.

To the extent that Americans outside the nation’s capital know anything about the four-term “mayor for life,” who died in 2014, it is that Barry presided over a fleetingly competent and glaringly scandal-ridden government and in the middle of his third mayoral term (1990) was arrested in a sting operation at a downtown hotel while smoking crack in the company of a woman who was not Mrs. Barry.

There are very few notable quotations associated with Mayor Barry; the best-known, by far, is his rueful comment while being handcuffed in the hotel room: “Bitch set me up.”

Like most successful demagogues, Barry had considerable personal charm—I was exposed to it on various occasions—which disguised a wholly disorganized and disordered private life. And unlike most politicians of his type, Barry did not seem to profit financially from public office. What he sought was power and acclaim. What he had was the indefinable appeal we call charisma and, in his time and place, he was hero to a sizable segment of the city’s African-American population.

For the latter half of the 20th century, Washington was a “majority

black” city—it ceased being so after the 2010 census—and the dedication of Barry’s monument was described by the *Washington Post* as an elegy, of sorts, for “Chocolate City,” when the nation’s capital “went from a federal protectorate to independence, and the region became home to a large African American middle class.”



In the 1978 mayoral primary, the *Washington Post* abandoned Walter Washington and embraced Barry—a strategic boost the *Post*, no doubt, would prefer to forget.

In one sense, I felt a certain sympathy for the *Post* reporter, who was treading on sensitive soil. But at the same time, the *Post*’s description of the District of Columbia’s transition from congressional protectorate to (limited) home rule was only approximately accurate—and the *Post* knows it.

For the fact is that credit for the aforementioned transition belongs not to Marion Barry but to his predecessor Walter Washington, who was appointed mayor-commissioner when the District was granted a measure of self-government (1967) during the Johnson administration. It was Mr. Washington who organized most of the agencies of city government and was elected to the office of mayor, in his own right, in 1974. Under Barry, by contrast, the corruption and chaos in the midst of his fourth term—to which he was elected after a sojourn in prison—was such

that Congress reasserted control of the District government and placed it in receivership for a number of years toward the end of the century.

Indeed, the difference between Walter Washington and Marion Barry is a story in itself. Barry was a civil-rights “activist” who arrived in Washington in the mid-1960s and achieved local renown for his skill at exploiting Great Society programs and political street theater. Washington was a classic product of the city’s old black bourgeoisie, a Howard Law graduate whose career was spent in federal housing agencies and, briefly, in the Lindsay administration in New York City.

I suspect it was the comparative absence of charisma in Walter Washington that recommended him to Lyndon Johnson; a conscientious and largely competent public servant, he reassured the city’s commercial and political establishment in ways that the populist Marion Barry would not. That, at any rate, was the *Washington Post*’s rationale when, in the 1978 Democratic mayoral primary, it abandoned Washington and embraced the insurgent Barry—a strategic boost that the *Post*, no doubt, would prefer to forget.

Which brings us full circle. In a city full of neoclassical monuments and equestrian generals, the Barry fig-



Mayor Barry in bronze

ure is a kitschy depiction of the smiling mayor-for-life waving his hand in the fashion of Chairman Mao. But just down the avenue, in a less conspicuous spot, is a late-Victorian statue of Alexander Shepherd (1835-1902), a post-Civil War city commissioner and governor in an earlier incarnation of District self-government.

The Washington of Shepherd’s

day—he was something of an urban autocrat, 19th-century style—was a sleepy enclave of such primitive character that Congress briefly contemplated relocating the capital to St. Louis. It was Shepherd who drained the swamp (literally), paved the streets and sidewalks, dug the sewers, planted water and gas mains, put up street-lamps, installed streetcars, and laid track.

In that sense, to the extent that Washington, D.C., is a modern metropolis, credit goes almost exclusively to “Boss” Shepherd. But in 1979, when the Boss and his works were all but forgotten, Marion Barry had his statue removed to make way for a vast concrete enclosure set down in the middle of Pennsylvania Avenue and called Freedom Plaza. The Shepherd statue was deposited in a public works lot at the edge of the city where, at one point, it lay on its side in the mud and languished for decades.

Until, that is, a dozen years ago, when a local historian undertook a campaign to rescue the statue—and Alexander Shepherd’s repute—from oblivion. And so he stands, once again, on the same granite pedestal where he used to be seen before Marion Barry arrived in town. Unlike the mayor-for-life, Shepherd-in-stone isn’t waving; but then again, there’s no need for it. ♦

Worth Repeating from *WeeklyStandard.com*:

‘Since it is part of my duty as a diligent feminist to critique Barbie’s physiognomy, I’ll take some time out of my day to peruse Mattel’s two new lines of International Women’s Day dolls. The first, “Inspiring Women,” includes historical figures, Amelia Earhart, Frida Kahlo, and mathematician Katherine Johnson, while the “Shero” line includes contemporary athletes, a filmmaker, a chef, and an environmental conservationist,

among others. At first, there seems little to offend. Indeed, each doll mimics the height, face, and, vaguely, the shape of a real and very accomplished international woman. With just one problem: While they get Frida Kahlo’s eyebrows more or less right, they’ve airbrushed out the famous mustache she so proudly wore.’

—Alice B. Lloyd, *The Smart Girl’s Guide to International Women’s Day*

Greenbacks from Red China

Should Washington boost scrutiny of their investments? **BY TONY MECIA**

The United States welcomes foreign investment. When companies from overseas buy into American firms, they provide a source of money that creates jobs and boosts innovation. But if the investor is Chinese, there is a wrinkle—increasingly, the wary eyes of regulators and intelligence officials want to pry into the question of whether the investment threatens U.S. national security.

The Trump administration and members of Congress say they want the government to have better tools to scrutinize Chinese investment in the United States. They worry that the billions of dollars that Chinese firms are annually pouring into U.S. companies aren't just the normal give-and-take of international commerce. They fear that some of these investments could result in the Chinese government's acquiring key U.S. technology, especially in fields with military applications, and access to sensitive U.S. infrastructure or strategic real estate.

Politicians from both parties are sounding the alarm bell. In a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on global threats in February, Mark Warner (D-Va.) said he worried about Chinese companies that could "totally invade our market, particularly because so many of them are tied back to the Chinese government." Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) concurred: "I'm not sure, in the 240-some-odd-year history

of this nation, we've ever faced a competitor and potential adversary of this scale, scope, and capacity. . . . They are carrying out a well-orchestrated, well-executed, very patient long-term strategy to replace the United States as the most powerful and influential nation on Earth."



Hey, the new investors are here!

Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats replied to Rubio that the intelligence community has "full awareness of what the Chinese are attempting to do on a global basis. There's no question that what you have just articulated is what's happening with China."

Chinese companies are on a dramatic buying spree. In the last decade, U.S. investment by Chinese companies increased nearly 100-fold to \$29 billion in 2017, according to the Rhodium Group, a consulting company that studies international investment. That surge is part of a global strategy, though it also reflects China's growth as an economic power and the need felt by Chinese business leaders to diversify. Indeed, these investments fall all across the business spectrum: In recent

years, Chinese companies bought Smithfield Foods, for instance, and acquired minority stakes in Cirque du Soleil and Snapchat.

Hardly anybody worries about Chinese control of the U.S. bacon supply or how the Red Army might wield a stable of half-naked acrobats or teenage selfies. More nettlesome is the issue of what happens when Chinese investors want to buy U.S. technology companies or unusual real estate.

The problem reflects our government's complicated relationship with the Chinese regime. On the one hand, we look to China as a key trading partner and a friend that might help us rein in North Korea. American businesses themselves are investing in China, partnering with Chinese

companies, and eyeing the country as a major source of growth. On the other hand, China is a strategic competitor that is challenging U.S. interests across Asia. It is pushing to dominate fields such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, and robotics—all of which have obvious military applications—using just about any means necessary, including cyberattacks and economic espionage.

And because of the fusion of the Chinese political, economic, and military spheres, the government can be expected to appropriate any technology it wants from its companies.

"The problem in China is that if you're a Chinese company and the government shows up and says, 'Help us out,' you can't say no," notes James Lewis, a military technology specialist with the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The tricky part, he says, is trying to discern "when is it a legitimate investment and when is it a risk to national security." Move too far one way, and you stifle commerce and subject whole industries to routine government review. Go too far the other direction, and you risk boosting the military capability of a potential adversary.

The government body tasked with

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this policing is the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS). It is a federal panel composed of representatives from the major executive branch departments including Justice, Treasury, State, Homeland Security, Energy, and Defense. The committee, which is led by the treasury secretary, has the power to recommend that the president reject any deal that results in foreign individuals or companies taking control of U.S. companies if the deal could harm national security. If the panel recommends a deal be rejected—a rare move—the president must publicly announce his decision.

The number of cases CFIUS reviews annually has nearly tripled since 2009, to 172, according to the panel's latest annual report to Congress, and a fifth of the deals reviewed involved a Chinese acquisition.

But even deals that don't directly involve China can be rejected because of the country's growing strength. Just this month, CFIUS said it is examining the proposed hostile takeover of U.S. semiconductor maker Qualcomm by Broadcom, a Singapore-based maker of computer components. The fear is that the deal would deprive the United States of a valuable domestic defense contractor, and Chinese firms would spring up to fill the void in the competition to build the next generation of wireless capability, known as 5G.

Sometimes, companies scuttle deals themselves when it appears from the review process that CFIUS will reject them. That's what happened last month with the proposed purchase of Xcerra, a Massachusetts company that makes equipment for testing computer chips, by a Chinese-backed investment fund. In January, MoneyGram called off a merger with a subsidiary of Chinese e-tailing giant Alibaba.

In the last five years, the only presidential rejections on security grounds involved U.S. semiconductor companies targeted for acquisition by Chinese interests. In December 2016, President Obama denied a Chinese investment fund's attempt to buy the U.S. operations of Aixtron, a German semiconductor company. In September, Trump rejected a proposed acquisition

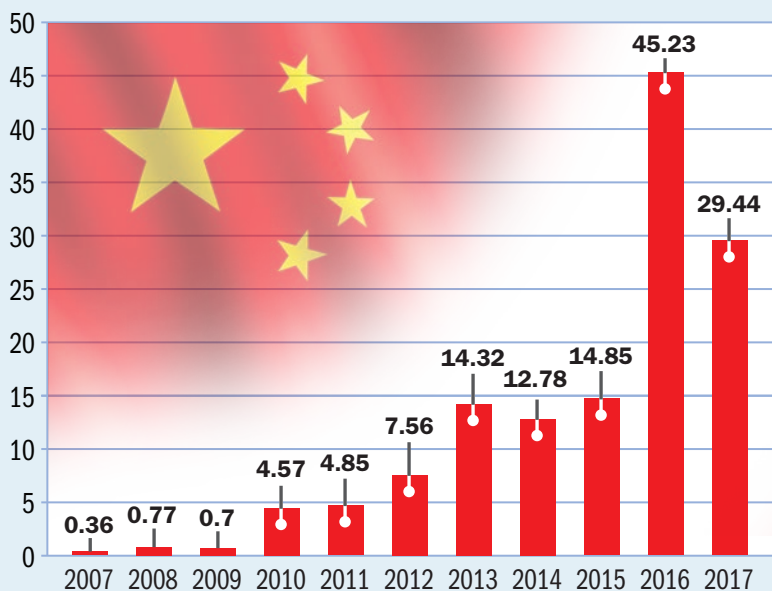
of Lattice Semiconductor by a Chinese-backed private equity firm. In response, a Chinese commerce ministry spokesman groused, with no apparent sense of irony, that government security reviews "should not become a tool for advancing protectionism."

For an administration that has no

money. "If the Chinese government finds some startup in Silicon Valley and a guy drops by and says, 'I'll give you \$10 million,' that's a little below the radar," says the American Enterprise Institute's Derek Scissors, an expert on Chinese investment. "They can't track everybody doing everything."

China Shopping

Chinese investments in U.S. companies have soared in the last decade, part of a strategy to dominate tech fields. Annual Chinese investment in U.S. firms, in billions of U.S. dollars:



SOURCE: Rhodium Group

qualms about slapping tariffs on allies and withdrawing from international agreements, applying more national-security scrutiny to sales of U.S. companies to potentially hostile countries would seem a natural move. A report last month by the Rhodium Group noted that under Trump, CFIUS "seems to have broadened its approach for reviewing Chinese deals, taking into consideration a broader array of criteria when assessing security risks." But there are difficulties even in identifying the investments that might pose the greatest risk down the road.

Mergers and acquisitions involving big and established companies are easy to track. But sophisticated technology is being pioneered by tiny startups—many of which are desperate for

The tech news site *Recode* reported last fall that a Chinese sovereign wealth fund and a major Chinese investment bank were both increasing their presence in Silicon Valley. The investment bank has opened a San Francisco office and "has a mandate to do more direct investing in startups," *Recode* wrote.

In the Senate hearing on global threats, FBI director Christopher Wray said: "One of the bigger challenges we face is that because America is the land of innovation, there's a lot of very exciting stuff that's happening in terms of smaller start-up companies. A lot of them are less sophisticated about some of this stuff."

Concerns about foreign companies buying U.S. real estate will remind

many of similar worries about Japan in the 1980s. But with China today, the concern is that it is buying land near U.S. military bases. In a 2012 case, Obama rejected a Chinese acquisition of a wind farm near the Naval Weapons Systems Training Facility Boardman in Oregon, where the military tests unmanned drones and other aircraft. A similar case in 2009 involving a Nevada mining company near a Navy installation was withdrawn when it became clear it would not be approved.

Government enforcement has its limits. Under current law, CFIUS can reject transactions only if a foreign company acquires “control” of a U.S. company. It might be possible, then, for an overseas firm to buy a minority stake in a company and still receive access to sensitive information.

Peter Singer, who specializes in security issues at the think tank New America, says concerns about Chinese technological prowess should prompt a wholesale rethinking of how the government protects this sector of the economy. He says we need a “space race” mentality that does more than just try to stop China. He suggests spending more on science education and encouraging the best foreign scientists to come to the United States. “It’s not just what is China doing, it’s what are we *not* doing,” he says. “In a number of these areas, we don’t have an overall national strategy.”

Congress is trying to give the executive branch more power to reject foreign investments. A bill introduced by Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas), and cosponsored by five Republicans and five Democrats, has strong support from the administration. The House version, introduced by Rep. Robert Pittenger (R-N.C.), has 34 cosponsors, including 6 Democrats. The bill would revamp the CFIUS process and bring many more transactions under its microscope. Yet even if it passes, the bill won’t solve the problem of aggressive Chinese investment. It would merely empower the Trump administration to take a more active role in safeguarding U.S. security interests. The hard decisions would still lie ahead. ♦

Finishing the Race

Roger Bannister, 1929-2018.

BY JIM RYUN

When I heard the news of Roger Bannister’s death last week at the age of 88, I recalled the first time I ever heard of Bannister, in the spring of 1963.

I was rattling back to Wichita from Kansas City in an old yellow school

first thought was, “Who is Bannister?” I knew more about baseball and Mickey Mantle than I did about running and runners.

Months before I had been a gangly high school sophomore in search of meaning, something to define myself by. I had been cut from the baseball team when my throw from third to first developed a hop (to add insult to injury, this was the church baseball team). My search for a life calling continued to come up empty after I was invited out for the junior high basketball team and then asked to turn my practice jersey in that same day.

But something eventually clicked that sophomore year. Slogging through the late summer heat of Kansas, I survived the first few grueling weeks of cross country practice and made my first team. I was the 21st man on a three-squad, 21-man team. But I was finally on a team. Then, very quickly, I moved up from the C team to the JV team to leading my varsity squad to a state championship that fall, placing sixth overall in the Kansas High School

Cross Country Championships.

I had found my calling. I was born to run.

That spring of 1963, a whole new world opened up before me, and in that moment on the school bus, my coach challenged me to reach a goal that no one else had achieved. The ensuing summer, fall, and winter, I knew the work that it was going to take to run a sub-four mile in high school. I became increasingly aware of the trail blazed by Roger Bannister nine years before. There were times I would sit slouched in a chair in Coach Timmons’s office, complaining, “Coach, I don’t think I can do this. I am



Bannister at the tape, May 6, 1954

bus when my high school coach, Bob Timmons, said, “I think you can be the first high school boy to break four minutes in the mile, just like Roger Bannister became the first man to break four minutes in 1954.”

Having just scratched out a 4:21 mile to win the Washington Relays that afternoon, I wasn’t sure how to digest what he was telling me. My

Jim Ryun is a three-time Olympian and former world record holder in the 880-yard, 1,500-meter, and one-mile run. After serving 10 years in Congress, he spends his days with grandchildren and helping run the Jim Ryun Running Camps (www.RyunRunning.com).

NORMAN POTTER / CENTRAL PRESS / GETTY

tired, it's hard. . . . I just don't know."

"Jim, I can't make you do this," he would say. "You have to be the one. This has to be your goal."

There is a unique quality to the one-mile run. Those who excel in it have a blend of footspeed and endurance. Both have to be honed weekly. Roger Bannister was famous for his 10x440 yard workout, where, over his lunch breaks as a medical student, he would try to average under 60 seconds per 440 repetition. He and his coach, Franz Stampfl, reasoned that if he could run under 60 seconds for ten 440s in a workout, then stringing together four in a race would be easy. While the rationale behind the workout was sound, there is nothing easy about ten 440 reps done in under 60 seconds. The body becomes awash with lactic acid early in the workout, sparking a painful skirmish between the body and the mind and a deep desire to just stop.

Taking a page from Bannister's training, I ran endless repetitions of 440s under the watchful eye of Coach

Timmons and achieved my goal a year early in 1964, when I ran 3:59.1 at the Compton Relays in California. Little did I know that my race caught the attention of Roger Bannister himself. He began following my career with avid interest, but our paths did not cross until 1967, when, after having just broken my own world record in the mile with a time of 3:51.1, I won the Emsley Carr mile in London. Eager to see me race, Bannister had purchased a ticket and sat in the stands, seeking me out afterwards to introduce himself. I don't recall much of our first conversation other than his attempt to pry training details from my shy, 20-year-old self. I do recall there was something genuine about him. He was in awe of my training. I was in awe of him.

A year later, our paths crossed again when my friend Rich Clarkson arranged for a dinner for me, my then-fiancée (now-wife) Anne, and Dr. Bannister during the Mexico City Olympics. We talked about

running, of course, but we also talked about life. Anne and I asked for ideas about building a healthy marriage and family. Dr. Bannister did not disappoint us, offering insights into his family's life, like the fact that they had taken the television out of their home and had more family walks, more conversations, and more time to read books as a result. These were among the many lessons Anne and I employed in raising our own family.

It is hard to put into words the impact Roger Bannister had, not just on me, but on the world. After he hung up his track spikes, Dr. Bannister had a distinguished 40-year career in neurology, claiming it, not his sub-four-minute mile, was his greatest achievement. Records are there to be set and then broken. All six of my world records have long since been beaten, but what Bannister did on May 6, 1954, showed the world what was possible with singular purpose. For that, he holds a place alone in history. ♦

Maximizing the Promise of Our New Economy

THOMAS J. DONOHUE

PRESIDENT AND CEO
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

As the pace of economic change continues to accelerate, it is transforming the way we work and conduct business at a breathtaking pace. This change presents an extraordinary opportunity for growth and job creation. To seize it, however, we must prepare workers to compete and succeed in the new economy. This is why the U.S. Chamber of Commerce launched the New Economy Working Group on February 22 to begin exploring the challenges and opportunities of a modern workforce.

A recent poll by the Chamber and Morning Consult highlighted the importance of this new initiative by revealing many common concerns Americans have about technological change. For example, 3 in 4 adults are worried that lawmakers don't understand the complexities of the changing economic landscape, while 7 in 10 believe that

U.S. workers are not equipped with the skills necessary to compete. The poll also confirmed that Americans generally view automation as a threat, with nearly half saying it will eliminate more jobs than it will create.

Addressing these concerns requires leaders to work together from across society—from government to business to education. The New Economy Working Group, launched by the Chamber Technology Engagement Center (C_TEC) in partnership with Expedia and Postmates, is in a unique position to make a difference by convening a variety of stakeholders, including legislators, regulators, and business leaders from every industry. For example, U.S. Secretary of Labor Alexander Acosta attended the kickoff event and shared his views on a range of topics related to the future of work.

The working group is focused on the sharing, gig, and on-demand economies. It will identify the skills and talent required to prepare American workers for 21st century jobs in exciting

marketplaces, including companies like Uber, Airbnb, and Handy, where service providers can connect directly with customers through technology. The working group will advocate ways of modernizing the benefits structure to reflect the changing nature of work and better understand the attitudes of new economy workers.

Technological change remains a powerful opportunity for growth and job creation, but it's increasingly important for the business community and policymakers to coordinate and cooperate on a response to evolving workforce needs. This is essential for broadly sharing the benefits of technological change and economic growth, especially in distressed communities where jobs have been lost and entire industries have dried up. The New Economy Working Group will play a critical role in developing policies that extend the promise of the 21st century economy to all Americans.



Learn more at
uschamber.com/abovethefold.



Gerrymandering Pennsylvania

Judges do it, too.

BY JAY COST

State legislative elections are easily overlooked, but they can carry enormous consequences for policy and politics, even on the national level. Democrats were reminded of this truth the hard way in 2010, when Republicans took control of state governments across the country amid the Tea Party wave. That put the GOP in prime position to redraw federal and state legislative districts after the 2010 census—Republicans had a stronger hand in this process than at any point since the Great Depression.

Ever since then, Democrats have been grumbling—not without reason—about the pro-GOP district lines, or “gerrymanders,” Republicans put

in place. Not in every state, obviously: Some states, like Arizona and California, have lines drawn by nonpartisan commissions while others, like Maryland and Illinois, have Democratic gerrymanders. But Republicans crafted some very strong district configurations in places like North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, while Democrats could only sit and stew—and, eventually, sue. Since the left saw its political power stripped in 2011, it has asked the courts to depoliticize the process altogether. The Supreme Court is currently considering suits over district lines in Maryland and Wisconsin. There is a good chance that Justice Anthony Kennedy, the Court’s swing vote, will discover a previously unnoticed constitutional mandate against a practice that dates back to the First Congress.

Democrats have also sought relief from state courts, and last month the Pennsylvania supreme court gave them a major victory, invalidating the gerrymander the state legislature drafted, and Republican former governor Tom Corbett approved, back in 2011. The Pennsylvania court, unlike many in the nation, is popularly elected, with justices running as avowed partisans. Democrats control a majority, which decided that the Republican gerrymander violated the state constitution. Never mind that the court had never noticed such a rule before; the Democratic majority insisted that the Republican-dominated legislature work with Governor Tom Wolf, a Democrat, to come up with a new map whose boundaries did not cross so many county and municipal lines.

To be fair, the court articulated a sensible standard when it struck down the GOP map. It is hard to defend gerrymanders that slice and dice existing political communities on any grounds other than naked partisanship. However, the United States Constitution clearly gives the right to state legislatures, not state courts, to determine the time, manner, and location of federal elections. Of course, modern courts have rarely been bashful about giving themselves maximum leeway in the constitutional schema, so it is unlikely that the Supreme Court will invalidate the Pennsylvania court’s maneuver, the plain text of our founding charter notwithstanding.

Republicans might have shrugged their shoulders and agreed to play more fairly next time—except that fair play is not what the court was really interested in. It gave the state legislature little more than a month to work out a compromise with Governor Wolf. That, naturally, was never going to happen, which seems to have been precisely the point—for it would give the court legal cover to impose its own map on the state.

Nonpartisan experts expected that the new map would favor Democrats. It would have to, considering how aggressively the Republicans gerrymandered the state back in 2011. But

MICHAEL RAMIREZ

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what the court actually did took everybody by surprise. While generally hewing to its own standard, the court nevertheless made judgment call after judgment call that favored Democrats over Republicans. And in a few cases, it broke its standard to help Democrats—as with the redrawn 7th Congressional District that mashes parts of Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties into a single district.

The result is a new congressional map that is more favorable to Democrats than those proposed by Wolf and Lieutenant Governor Mike Stack. And while it is not as tortuous as the original GOP map, a careful study of the new map easily reveals how voters were systematically rearranged in precise ways to help Democrats.

It remains to be seen just what effect this tinkering will have in November. The trouble with gerrymanders like the map Republicans put together in 2011 is that they tend not to withstand electoral waves, like the one that seems to be brewing for Democrats in the 2018 cycle. Organizing voters just so can easily backfire when a critical mass of them decide to bolt your party. The same works in the other direction: A Republican wave would probably overwhelm the new pro-Democratic map. But one can appreciate the work the Democrats on the court did by looking at a middling outcome. Sean Trende, senior elections analyst for *Real Clear Politics*, estimates that in a neutral year, i.e., one in which the two sides were evenly matched nationwide, the new map would net the Democrats three seats they otherwise would not get under the 2011 map.

All told, this was a bold power play by the court's Democrats and a deeply disingenuous one at that. The argument the court made was that Pennsylvania is an evenly divided state and one party should not get to dominate the congressional delegation. That has merits, even though the state was certainly *not* evenly split in 2011, when new lines were to have been drawn. But if we accept the court's reasoning, what then justifies the narrow, Democratic majority hijacking the

process? The Democrats, for the supposed sake of partisan equity, basically shut out the strongly Republican legislature and put together a map that is manifestly more pro-Democratic than what any bipartisan compromise would have generated!

Sure, politics ain't beanbag, as Mr. Dooley would no doubt be quick to remind us. Democrats on the state supreme court had their shot to undo the 2010 midterm, and they took it. Republicans have surely given as good as they've gotten over the years—in Pennsylvania especially. But the court's audacity reveals the truth about many of the arguments

we have heard from Democrats since the 2011 redistricting: Despite protestations to the contrary, hardly anybody really cares about a fair process. These seemingly principled claims that gerrymandering undermines democracy are really just cover to agitate to redraw lines more beneficial to Democrats.

If the political fortunes continue to blow in favor of the Democrats, and they do well in state legislative battles in 2020, it is an easy bet that they will suddenly become less insistent that the courts put up guardrails on gerrymandering. Despite what they say, it is *all* about politics. ♦

Science Reveals Something Old

Men and women together in college dorms hook up. BY NAOMI SCHAEFER RILEY

Is there anything left to be learned about the mating habits of college students? For years, we have been subjected to a barrage of books about the rituals of drunken sex. In addition to *Hooking Up* and *American Hookup*, there's the recent *Blurred Lines: Rethinking Sex, Power, and Consent on Campus* and the more explicit *Fraternity Gang Rape*. Whether you read *The End of Sex* or *The End of Men*, the situation has seemed pretty dire. Even if we understand that sexual assault as it's commonly understood off campus is not very common on campus, there's a lot of, well, regrettable sex.

Adults on campus generally subscribe to the view that the only way to fix this situation is to reeducate students about how, when, and with whom they should hook up, and then run any male student off campus if a

woman accuses him of looking at her the wrong way. But a recent report from some ethnographers at Columbia University may offer a different way out of the problem.

Three years ago, the school launched a program called the Sexual Health Initiative to Foster Transformation, or SHIFT. Researchers watched students in their natural habitats—at sports events, club meetings, dorm parties, and neighborhood bars—and took field notes. Now the research is going to be published in a book, *The Sexual Project*, describing “the often hidden forces of campus ecosystems that determine how and when assault happens.”

Many of the findings have not been released yet but the two lead researchers—Jennifer Hirsch, a medical anthropologist, and Claude A. Melins, a clinical psychologist—recently told the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about their findings. Here's how the *Chronicle* describes them:

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When students described their sexual encounters, one thing they emphasized repeatedly—to the dismay of the ethnographers interviewing them—was the belief that the moment they had consented to have sex with someone was when they had entered their room or sat on their bed.

Interviewers would ask whether, realistically, there had been any other place to sit. Often, there hadn't. "On the one hand, we have this bed symbolizing consent," [one researcher] says. "And, on the other hand, the built environment might not be giving people that many choices."

So after thousands of hours of observations and interviews, what these ethnographers found is that hanging out in bedrooms is more likely to lead to sex. Indeed, the researchers suggest creating "alternative spaces whose availability might steer drunk kids away from ending up on a dorm bed." The article explains:

At Columbia, many lounges had been converted into study areas, Hirsch says, so there were not a lot of couches to sprawl on at 4 A.M. Now the university's dining officials, who have been speaking with Shift's research team, are keeping a campus eatery open all night.

Keen observers will recognize that keeping drunk (or even sober) students out of each other's bedrooms has long been employed as a method for reducing nonconsensual or regrettable sex. College administrators used to do this with single-sex dorms and parietal rules, restricting the presence of non-residents in dorms after certain hours of the evening. Sure, it's possible for enterprising students to find secluded spaces on campus where they might have sex after an evening of carousing. But it's not that easy. And frankly, it's much harder to be enterprising when you're falling-down drunk.

After the sexual revolution swept college campuses in the '60s and '70s, there were a few holdouts who clung to the old rules—mostly religious schools. Notre Dame, for instance, never caved. But there was also the late John Silber of Boston University, who received letters of complaint

from parents that their children were being forced to live with roommates' significant others for months on end. In a letter to the student newspaper, he wrote, "It never occurred to us that [BU] was in the business of providing weekend love nests for our students."

After thousands of hours of observations and interviews, what these ethnographers found is that hanging out in bedrooms is more likely to lead to sex. Indeed, the researchers suggest creating 'alternative spaces whose availability might steer drunk kids away from ending up on a dorm bed.'



Just somewhere to hang out

In 1988 Silber instituted a rule that all guests had to be out of the dorms by 11 P.M. Sundays through Thursdays and by 1 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Overnight guests might be permitted a few times a year, but only in rooms of people of the same sex. The students raised hell, but one wonders how many fewer sexual assaults, let alone drunken hookups, would take place under such a regime.

Sex, as most sociologists will tell you, is a matter of opportunity. It's why we tend to marry people we work with or live near or go to school with. Infidelity is also a matter of opportunity. This doesn't mean that every person who

goes on a business trip with a colleague of the opposite sex is going to cheat. It just means that it's far more likely to happen. And so the fact that college students enjoy each other's company (drunk or sober) just a short walk from their bedrooms makes it more likely they will end up in bed together. This has proved to be an especially intractable problem at fraternities, where the party rooms and the bedrooms are often separated only by a staircase.

Announcing his decision in 2011 to make Catholic University's dormitories single sex again, the school's president John Garvey wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*:

I know it's countercultural. More than 90% of college housing is now co-ed. But Christopher Kaczor at Loyola Marymount points to a surprising number of studies showing that students in co-ed dorms (41.5%) report weekly binge drinking more than twice as often as students in single-sex housing (17.6%). Similarly, students in co-ed housing are more likely (55.7%) than students in single-sex dorms (36.8%) to have had a sexual partner in the last year—and more than twice as likely to have had three or more.

Like most schools, Columbia is unlikely to return to single-sex dorms. And in an era of "gender fluidity," who knows what sorts of issues would arise from such a policy? But if college administrators do not think that students can be trusted to monitor their own sexual habits—and the number of students claiming that they have been assaulted or that sitting on someone's bed renders them powerless to turn down sex suggests these students have not transitioned to adulthood yet—then a return to *in loco parentis* cannot be ruled out.

Instead of providing metaphorical safe spaces to protect students from speakers whose views they find offensive, college administrators might focus on providing literal safe spaces—lounges, snack bars, and other public areas—where students of the opposite sex can enjoy each other's company without needing to sit on each other's beds.

◆ IVAN DIMITRI / MICHAEL / OCHS ARCHIVES / GETTY

The Truth About Putin

*The March 18 elections are nothing but a sham—
the Russian dictator will serve just as long as he pleases*

BY GARRY KASPAROV

On March 18, the popular leader of Russia, Vladimir Putin, will be reelected to another six-year term as president. This is both a plain statement of fact and a complete falsehood. In American political parlance, this statement can be taken literally, but not seriously.

The conundrum is due to the weakness of language and how we allow even the simplest words to be manipulated and distorted. That simple sentence about Putin and the Russian presidential election on March 18 is wrong in every possible way aside from the date and Putin's name.

Before we unpack the many fictions in that statement, let us begin with what will happen, literally, on March 18 in Russia. Many people will go to polling stations and cast votes for different candidates. Putin and the other candidates will be shown on television dropping their paper ballots into boxes and smiling as the cameras flash. Vladimir Putin will receive a healthy majority of the vote, likely around the 64 percent he got in 2012. He will appear on television to thank the Russian people for their continued support and for returning him to the presidency for another six years. The Russian press will report on the world leaders who call to congratulate Putin on his victory, a cohort likely to include the president of the United States of America.

That very last part leans into speculation, I admit, although it would be ungrateful of Donald Trump not to send a kind word to Putin, who invested far more time and effort on Trump's election than he has on his own. In fact,

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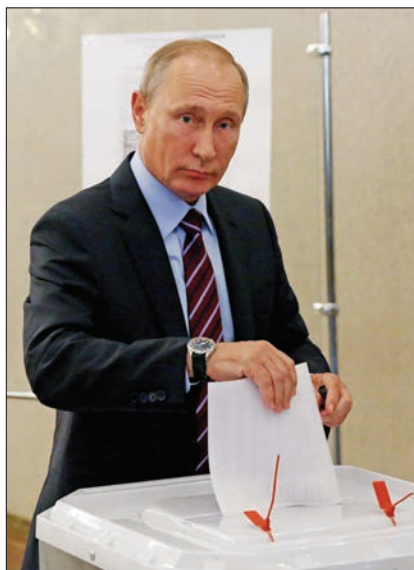
the Kremlin has worked harder to promote the other candidates in the Russian election than to advertise the incumbent, so desperate are they to pump up turnout among a demoralized citizenry that is well aware that Putin isn't going anywhere after 18 years in power.

But let us turn to the first lie in that opening sentence, that Putin is being elected on March 18. There is no real selection taking place. When I retired from professional chess in 2005 to join the Russian pro-democracy movement

against Putin, I was frequently asked how my chess experience might help me in politics. My answer was that it wouldn't help much at all, because in chess we had fixed rules and uncertain results, while in Russian politics it was exactly the opposite. That is even truer today, when the rules are whatever the Kremlin decides that day, and the results have been known for years. The domain name "putin2018.ru" was registered in 2010, during the Obama administration's infamous "Reset" with Russia and its dreams of Dmitry Medvedev liberalization. Putin2024.ru, putin2030.ru, and putin36.ru have also been locked up, in case you were wondering.

Putin will continue in power as if by birthright, and calling this an election soils the meaning of a word that

should be treasured. Yet the media of the free world persist in referring to "elections" in dictatorships like Putin's Russia because they have no vocabulary to call it anything else—a predicament undemocratic regimes exploit very well. Even calling Putin a "president" is at best inaccurate and abominable propaganda at worst. A president is "the elected head of a republican state" according to my dictionary, while Putin isn't elected and Russia isn't a republic. He may have been a president when he first came to power in 2000, that I will grant. But since 2012, when he returned to the presidency, unconstitutionally, after allowing Medvedev to warm the chair for four years while ceding none of his



Vladimir Putin 'votes' in municipal 'elections,' September 10, 2017.

MIKHAIL SVETLOV / GETTY

power, there has been no doubt at all that Putin should simply be called a dictator.

Let's move on to the next major lie in my opening statement, the idea of Putin's popularity in Russia. I could not begin to count the number of times I've been forced to address this myth, the persistence of which I again attribute to our lack of language to describe modern dictatorships. Terms like "polls" and "popularity" as applied to politicians in the free world have very different meanings in authoritarian regimes. I'm fond of asking in response to questions about Putin's "popularity" if a restaurant is popular if it's the only one in town and every other restaurant was burned to the ground.

This is not to say that a dictator or his policies cannot have popular support. The problem is defining what support means after 18 years of a personality cult and 24/7 propaganda that portrays Putin as a demigod protecting Russia from deadly enemies without and within. A year of fake news trolling and half-baked social media memes had half of America and its vaunted media running in circles in 2016. Imagine what it does to a population when that's all there is, every hour, every day, for nearly two decades.

The same definition issue arises with the word "election." In a free society, the day of the vote is the culmination of a long democratic process that depends on equal access to an unfettered media, fair conditions, debates, etc., none of which have existed in Russia for nearly 20 years. Postulating that Putin would win anyway even if the March 18 election were honest is a meaningless exercise. If he and his policies were truly popular, in the real sense of the word, he wouldn't need to spend so much time and effort dominating the media, eliminating rivals, and rigging elections large and small. Persecuting bloggers and arresting a single protester standing in the town square with an anti-Putin sign does not strike me as the behavior of a ruler who believes in his own popularity.

As for polling, when an anonymous caller reaches a Russian at home to ask his opinion of the man who controls every aspect of the Russian police state, it would take great courage to report anything less than enthusiastic support. It is a testament to the bravery of many of my countrymen that Putin does not yet receive the 99 percent approval scores that Saddam Hussein and Muammar Qaddafi enjoyed up until the minute they no longer had the power of life and death over their own citizens.

With even his nominal opponents openly conceding that Putin will rule for as long as he pleases, the Kremlin has become obsessed with turnout this year. Empty polling stations make it more difficult to keep up the charade of democracy. So this year a wider selection of opponents has been allowed to appear on the ballot. Most previous elections followed a formula of including one Communist and one Nationalist candidate to frame Putin as the moderate protecting Russia and the world from these dangerous extremes. It says quite a bit about how tired this tactic has become that the Nationalist being trotted out, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, first ran for president against Yeltsin in 1991.

The longtime Communist, Gennady Zyuganov, has at least finally ceded his role to a successor.

The Communist bogeyman wasn't just a prop back in 1996, when many liberals, including me, made the profound mistake of supporting Boris Yeltsin against Zyuganov to the point of turning a blind eye

to Yeltsin's abuse of power to win the election. He did lasting damage to Russia's democratic institutions. Russians were still in shock after the collapse of the USSR, and our new country was foundering thanks to rampant corruption and the first Chechen war. Russians had been under the illusion that democracy would lead directly to a better standard of living, as if ballot boxes were ATMs. The free Russian press—yes, one existed for a while, yellow and raucous as it was—enjoyed blasting Yeltsin as a lackey of our former archenemy, America. Many Russians were starting to wonder if a return to communism would really be so bad.

Yeltsin was anything but a firm hand, but the reformers had known all along that the advertised benefits of liberalization would take a while. Handing the fragile Russian state over to the Communists while the ink was not dry on our new constitution was a terrifying thought to anyone who hoped to see Russia finally join the community of free and stable nations.

Yeltsin was saved in 1996, at the high cost of failing to build up the strong democratic institutions the country desperately needed. Four years later, a leader far more ruthless and anti-democratic came along, and Putin found it all too easy to bend and break these feeble institutions. It's still unfathomable that Russia went from joyously celebrating the end of totalitarianism to electing a KGB



Which one will have the nerve to stop laughing first?

lieutenant-colonel in just nine years. Never take your liberty for granted, and be careful whom you vote for because it may be the last election you'll ever have.

In 2012, oligarch Mikhail Prokhorov was added to Zyuganov and Zhirinovskiy to spice up the election theater a bit. Prokhorov was even allowed to make some muted criticisms of Putin's record. He collected a meager 8 percent, barely outstripping the clownish Zhirinovskiy, and quietly returned to his normal duties of draining capital out of Russia and owning the Brooklyn Nets.

That 2012 presidential election took place in the shadow of the largest Russian political protests of the post-Soviet era. Starting in December 2011, hundreds of thousands took to frozen streets across the country to protest parliamentary elections that were corrupt even by Putin's low standards. Anger over the particularly blatant vote-rigging reached its peak on December 24, when 120,000 people gathered at Sakharov Prospect in Moscow to protest "the party of crooks and thieves," as opposition leader Alexei Navalny had dubbed Putin's United Russia, under the banners of "For Fair Elections" and "Russia Without Putin." Here were speakers—I was one—who, unlike the Kremlin-sponsored candidates for president, were not shy about putting the blame on Putin. For the first time since I helped launch the relatively sparse Dissenters' Marches in 2005, it looked like there might be enough popular disgust to change the Kremlin's power calculations.

"I see enough people here to take the Kremlin or White House," said Navalny—referring to a Russian government building, not the home of the American president. "But we are a peaceful force—we won't do that, for now."

It is easy to say in hindsight that this was our opportunity to risk all. Had we set up a camp that day, would the people have supported us in demanding new elections? Had we marched to Red Square, would a million Muscovites have come out to join us in demanding Putin's exit? We'll never know. In chess, we say that the player with the initiative is obliged to attack, otherwise the initiative will be lost and the counterattack will likely be decisive. In December 2011, we had the initiative, but we did not attack. Putin did not make the same mistake.

Protests continued well into 2012, but the crucial momentum had been lost. A series of draconian laws were passed to crack down on dissent. Prison sentences for civil disobedience went from days to years. Police attacked the "March of Millions" in Moscow's Bolotnaya Square a day ahead of Putin's inauguration on May 7—the Kremlin quickly labeling the rally "riots by extremists aimed at destabilizing the country." Afterward, instead of merely targeting the organizers as usual, dozens of Bolotnaya protesters were arrested and prosecuted. The homes and businesses of opposition leaders and their families were raided,

resulting in political show trials not seen since Soviet days. Putin's gloves were off. By spring 2013, I understood that I could not return safely to Russia, and I joined my wife and daughter permanently in New York. In February 2015, the opposition leader Boris Nemtsov was gunned down in front of the Kremlin.

The implicit, or even explicit, offer made by authoritarians is stability in exchange for liberty. High oil prices allowed Putin to keep this bargain for a while, aided by an international community that lost interest in promoting liberty as soon as the Berlin Wall fell. Putin was welcomed by the G7 as an equal while destroying democracy and civil society at home. Imagine how difficult it was for us in Russia to attack Putin's regime as undemocratic while he was being embraced by the leaders of the free world. Even Putin's invasion of neighboring Georgia in August 2008 resulted in no censure or sanction. He was rewarded by Obama and Hillary Clinton's reset a few months later, confirming to him that a move into Ukraine would also go unchallenged.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2014 and soon announced the annexation of Crimea. This time the United States and the rest of the West did respond, but by then Russia was a very different place. Putin had consolidated power beyond any challenge at home, building up the military, the security forces, and the propaganda machine he was about to unleash on the world. Energy prices had plummeted, and Putin needed some way to justify his eternal hold on power. And so he made the fateful turn that every dictatorship eventually must when it needs enemies more than allies.

The vile anti-American and anti-E.U. rhetoric in the Russian media reached new levels of hatred and fear-mongering. Only recently have Americans and Europeans seen up close how much damage these toxic disinformation campaigns can do even in small doses, but Russians have been immersed in them for years. Every channel, every paper, every online forum and social platform—it's a barrage, a flood of poison.

This isn't the old Communist scheme of heavy-handed state censorship and official party lines. (The old joke about the two main Soviet papers, *Pravda* ("Truth") and *Izvestia* ("News"), was "There's no news in the *Truth* and no truth in the *News*!") Nor is it the labor-intensive "Great Firewall of China" model of real-time censorship and high-tech filtering. Befitting Putin's KGB roots, he instead built an alternate reality of propaganda, one in which there are hundreds of sources and opinions that all may contain elements of fact and fiction while always making sure to keep the larger truths well hidden—and reinforcing support for Putin above all.

The clearest example of this method in action was the Kremlin's response to the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 on July 17, 2014. It didn't take long to determine that MH17 was downed by a Russian-operated BUK antiaircraft missile battery inside Ukrainian territory. If you have any doubts about this at all, it is testament to how effective the Kremlin disinformation campaign has been at sowing doubt. By this point, we have everything from radio intercepts to visual identification of the actual BUK battery being moved back and forth across the Ukrainian border.

Issuing denials and attacking all the evidence was only a small part of the Russian response. Most of the effort instead went into churning out alternative scenarios about what had happened to MH17. There were no fewer than a dozen separate conspiracy theories spread by the Russian media and their agents, ranging from saying that the BUK missile was Ukrainian to blaming the CIA or Israel. One evening on Russian television, one channel had a documentary soberly explaining how a Ukrainian Su-25 fighter jet had done the deed, while at the same time another channel was demonstrating, with equal gravity, exactly how a Ukrainian missile battery had shot it down.

There are an infinite number of ways to lie and only one truth. Propaganda today is not a wall, not a dike holding back information from reaching the people. It is a flood, overwhelming our critical thinking. The concept is not to promote a particular narrative or agenda but to create doubt and to make people believe that the truth is unknowable. There are no Russian forces in Ukraine. Russia didn't meddle in the U.S. election. The popular Vladimir Putin was reelected on March 18, 2018.

That is what you'll hear, over and over, after Russia's election without selection. This year's "Prokhorov model" of an alternative candidate is the socialite and television personality Ksenia Sobchak. She has done more campaigning abroad than in Russia. The daughter of Putin's one-time boss, former St. Petersburg mayor Anatoly Sobchak, she is allowed to talk tough about Russia's problems while stopping short of criticizing Putin himself, who is rumored to be her godfather. There's also Grigory Yavlinsky, who has been the loyal liberal opposition, alternately added to and removed from the ballot like a puppet on a string, for decades. They are the

antique decorations of democracy, the props in the production. The charade must go on.

Alexei Navalny remains a legitimate opposition figure but has been banned from the election. He is now calling for the boycott we needed six years ago.

Last week's attempted assassination with a nerve agent of a former Russian spy in England reminds us that Putin is willing to poison bodies in the free world, not only minds. Why would he do this? Why would he call attention to his murderous ways now? Well, I'll turn that around and ask instead, why wouldn't he? Dictators don't ask "Why," they ask "Why not?" Putin killed FSB whistleblower Alexander Litvinenko with a

radioactive isotope in the center of London in 2006, and what price did he pay? Three British prime ministers collaborated in hushing up the investigation in order not to offend Putin and shut down the countless billions in Russian cash that has flooded Britain in the last decades. After 18 years in power, Putin believes he can buy or bully his way out of anything. Will anyone prove him wrong?

Putin will push until he is pushed back. This will only take will from the West, and the methods exist. Putin cannot

afford a geopolitical defeat that would make him look weak in front of his cronies in Russia. Targeted sanctions like the Magnitsky Act can force Putin's gang to choose between their loyalty to him and their riches abroad. Isolation and deterrence work, and they are more likely to avoid war than the current track of appeasement. Like any bully, Putin only picks fights that he is sure he can win. History tells us that sooner or later, he will become so overconfident, so accustomed to his opponents folding their cards against his weak hand, that he will overstep, potentially resulting in a catastrophe on a global scale.

Russia's election spectacle on March 18 isn't only a domestic distraction. It provides Putin's defenders in the free world with rhetorical ammunition, as do the approval polls and fake controversies over the fake opposition candidates. There is no form of democratic process or opposition in Putin's Russia. Pretending otherwise makes you complicit in his propaganda. Stop calling them elections. Stop calling Putin a president. Stop calling to congratulate him on his victories. Let us begin the fight against Putin's lies with the fundamental truth about what he really is. ♦



'The frosting is uneven on that one.'

A Doozy of a Dossier

What we can learn rereading it

BY ERIC FELTEN

The so-called “Trump dossier” continues to be the most important—and contested—document in the many probes of Russian involvement in the 2016 presidential election. Since its publication by *BuzzFeed* on January 10, 2017—bearing the remarkable disclaimer that “the allegations are unverified, and the report contains errors”—it has set partisan hearts racing. Democrats have by and large treated it as a collection of solid leads in need of thorough investigation by intelligence and law-enforcement agencies. Senator Dianne Feinstein is typical in claiming that “not a single revelation in the Steele dossier has been refuted.” Republicans, by contrast, see it as a partisan hit job and wonder what’s become of the FBI and the Justice Department when they start crediting salacious rumors strung together by a Trump opponent.

But thanks to the investigations it has spawned, we know a lot more about the provenance of the dossier than when it was first published, and it bears rereading in light of what we have since learned.

The dossier is a series of memos written from June to December 2016 by former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele, alleging a Trump/Kremlin conspiracy. Paying for Steele’s work was the opposition research company Fusion GPS; paying Fusion GPS was the law firm Perkins Coie; paying Perkins Coie was the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton’s campaign.

Given that Steele presents largely uncheckable allegations from anonymous sources, the reliability and credibility of the dossier has rested on the reliability and credibility that has been claimed for Steele himself. According to senators Chuck Grassley and Lindsey Graham, during a briefing to senators in March 2017 then-director of the FBI James Comey vouched for Steele’s bona fides. In seeking a warrant from the U.S. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to eavesdrop on the communications of one-time Trump campaign aide Carter Page, the FBI had relied on the dossier; Comey told the senators, “because Mr. Steele himself was considered reliable due to his past work with the Bureau.”

At a 2017 House hearing with Comey, Rep. Joaquin Castro began his assessment of the dossier by proclaiming his reliance on “the reputation of the author.” According to the Texas Democrat, the fact that “Christopher Steele is a former accomplished British intelligence officer with a career built on following Russia is important. This is not someone who doesn’t know how to run a source and not someone without contacts.” Ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee Adam Schiff has described Steele glowingly as “a former British intelligence officer, who is reportedly held in high regard by U.S. intelligence.”

In all the scuffling over whether Clinton’s funding of the enterprise calls Steele’s credibility into question, little attention has been devoted to a more basic and obvious question posed by the dossier: How could a former spy in the U.K., in a matter of months, squeeze the highest ranks of the Russian government like a sponge and expose one of its most consequential and closely guarded schemes? Why do we pay CIA agents if a freelancer like Steele so easily runs circles around them?

Adding to the astonishing degree of difficulty of the trick, according to a fawning profile in the *New Yorker*, Steele hasn’t been to any former Soviet state, let alone Russia itself, since 2009. It’s a matter of personal safety—a contractor for his business-intelligence company warned him in 2012 that an agent of the FSB (the modern iteration of the KGB) had called Steele “an enemy of Mother Russia.” This is supposed to bolster the credibility of the dossier author. But it cuts the other way when it comes to the seeming ease with which Steele hoovered up information. Who in Moscow’s upper echelons is going to spill to “an enemy of Mother Russia”?

But spill, the dossier tells us, they did: The sources Steele describes are high-ranking. Source A is “a senior Russian Foreign Ministry figure.” Source B is “a former top level Russian intelligence officer still active inside the Kremlin.” Source C is a “senior Russian financial official.” A “trusted compatriot” of Sources A and B is indiscreet enough to tell Steele that “the Russian authorities had been cultivating and supporting US Republican presidential candidate, Donald TRUMP for at least 5 years.” Source B blabbed “that the TRUMP operation was both supported and directed by Russian President Vladimir PUTIN.”

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Let's stop for a second and take that in. On the first page of the dossier, Steele claims to have gotten senior Russian officials and their trusted friends to chit-chat about a secret plan crafted for five years by no less than Putin himself. Given the relative trivialities that can get one beaten to death in a Russian prison, these senior officials would seem to have exhibited an extraordinarily cavalier attitude toward their own health and well-being.

Is it plausible? One skeptic is an American journalist with a decade's experience working in Moscow. He points out the obvious: It can be dangerous to be a reporter in Russia and difficult to get sources with real information to share it. People asking questions of top officials and their associates don't go unnoticed in Putin's surveillance state, whether it's someone on the phone from England or just a nosy local. "Nobody Steele could have sent or talked to could have done so without it immediately coming to the attention of Russian internal security," says the journalist.

From the earliest days of the dossier inquiry, Russian security services would have had at least a couple of options: (1) They could have shut Steele down immediately, or (2) they could have taken the opportunity to feed him stories contrived to cause the most chaos and damage to the United States. The journalist says, "Whatever is in the dossier is there because Russia wanted it in the dossier." Unless, he adds, Steele just made things up and never had any serious Russian sources for the material in the first place.

Before moving on, let's consider one further curiosity: the famously lurid story that kicks off the dossier, in which Trump is said to have paid prostitutes to pee on his bed at the Moscow Ritz-Carlton. Steele's associates supposedly didn't want to include it—too sensational, they thought. But ever the straight-shooter, according to a "longtime friend" quoted in the *New Yorker*, Steele thought that "the possibility of a potential American President being subject to blackmail was too important to hide." But here we have another problem of plausibility: The dossier repeatedly treats "perverted sexual acts which have been arranged/monitored by the FSB" as the ultimate stuff of *kompromat*. Yet if Trump engaged in a multiyear criminal conspiracy with Russia, as the dossier claims, he exposed himself to blackmail by Putin on a scale that would make a library's worth of pornographic surveillance videos

trivial by comparison. And yet when it comes to Trump, our prurient spy friend keeps coming back to kinky sex as the gold-standard of *kompromat*.

Aside from the difficulty of clearing basic-believability hurdles, the dossier also appears to be padded. COMPANY INTELLIGENCE REPORT 2016/086—the memo following the water-sports piffle—provides "A SYNOPSIS OF RUSSIAN STATE SPONSORED AND OTHER CYBER OFFENSIVE [CRIMINAL] OPERATIONS." The report is an exercise in recycling. Though the date built into the title of the memo is 2016, most of the information is boilerplate dated to 2015 and in content and tone appears to have been written for one of Steele's run-of-the-mill business clients. Not only does it have no information about Trump, the memo doesn't mention anything about the 2016 election, nor anything about election-meddling of any sort. Here and there, whoever took the report off the shelf remembered to update it with a bit of data marked 2016, but the giveaway comes at the end of the memo, where Steele always puts a specific date. The memo is dated "26 July 2015."

There are glaring inconsistencies. Whereas in a June dossier entry, the Trump/Kremlin conspiracy is described as a five-year affair, by July Steele cites a "Source close to TRUMP campaign" that "regular exchange with Kremlin has existed for at least 8 years, including intelligence fed back to Russia on oligarchs' activities in US."

Five years—let alone eight—is an extraordinarily long time to maintain an international covert operation. And that's assuming top-notch, tight-lipped tradecraft. How does a conspiracy last five

days if it's comprised of Trump and associates on one end and loose-lipped Russians on the other? And what benefits was the Kremlin getting out of the bargain? Is it plausible that an FSB handler eager for info on oligarchs abroad would have recruited Donald Trump, in 2011 or 2008 or any other year, to keep tabs on them?

The one documented act of Russian footsie with Team Trump that we are so far aware of is the meeting Don Jr. took with Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya at Trump Tower in June 2016. Somehow, the dossier missed that outreach (even though Veselnitskaya was also a client of Fusion GPS, the firm directly paying Steele for the dossier). We know that meeting happened, but it makes no sense in the context of the compromising relationship the dossier purports to have



Christopher Steele

uncovered: If the Kremlin had been “cultivating, supporting and assisting Trump for at least 5 years,” as the dossier summarized, why the sudden need to reach out to Don Jr.?

Time and again the dossier attributes to Trump feats of political trickery that would be astonishing if performed by a disciplined and experienced organization. Nothing we have learned of the Trump campaign suggests either the discipline or the competence. Take the memo labeled COMPANY INTELLIGENCE REPORT 2016/095. It alleges not just the quite creditable assertion that the Kremlin is “behind recent appearance of DNC emails on WikiLeaks” but the rather more difficult to credit claim that the Russian hacking relied on an “exchange of information established in both directions”—that is, help from the Republican candidate: “TRUMP’s team using moles within DNC and hackers in the US as well as outside in Russia.”

As impressive as it would be for an independent operator to have even a single high-placed Russian government source, from memo to memo in the dossier the super-secret sources just keep coming. Among them is a “longstanding compatriot friend” of “a Kremlin insider.” And that insider has blockbuster stuff. Such blockbuster stuff that one is left scratching one’s head over why the FBI was wasting its time with a piker like Carter Page.

On October 18, 2016, just three days before the FBI sought a FISA warrant to surveil Page, Steele delivered one of the dossier’s most shocking allegations: “a Kremlin insider with direct access to the leadership,” he wrote, “confirmed that a key role in the secret TRUMP campaign/Kremlin relationship was being played by the Republican candidate’s personal lawyer Michael COHEN.” Shocking, because unlike Carter Page—a figure distant from Trump in the first place and who by October 2016 had already left the campaign—Cohen couldn’t have been closer to the candidate. Shocking, because the dossier accused Page only of entertaining the possibility of a bribe in exchange for lifting sanctions in the then-unlikely event Trump were to win the White House. Cohen, by contrast, was said to be personally managing the years-long international conspiracy: A “Kremlin insider highlighted the importance of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump’s lawyer, Michael COHEN, in the ongoing secret liaison relationship between the New York tycoon’s campaign and the Russian leadership,” alleged a dossier memo dated October 19, 2016.

Cohen was said to be tasked with covering up the conspiracy and worse. The memo dated October 20, 2016, tells of Trump’s lawyer going to Prague for “secret meeting/s with Kremlin officials.” The dossier claimed he went there to arrange payoffs: “The agenda comprised questions on how deniable cash payments were to be made to hackers who had worked in Europe under Kremlin direction

against the CLINTON campaign,” one memo specified, “and various contingencies for covering up these operations and Moscow’s secret liaison with the TRUMP team more generally.” The hackers were “paid by both TRUMP’s team and the Kremlin.”

By mid-October, Carter Page was good and washed-up and Steele was reporting that all the action was with Michael Cohen. Nor would it be impossible to imagine Cohen as a bag man—the lawyer, after all, was the one who arranged to pay porn performer Stormy Daniels to keep mum about any affair she may have had years ago with Trump. And yet days after Steele pegged Cohen as the linchpin to the Kremlin/Trump conspiracy, the FBI relied heavily on the dossier to put in for a FISA warrant to sweep not Cohen’s communications but Page’s. Why?

Perhaps it’s because the dossier memos involving Cohen included readily checkable details. For example, according to the dossier, “COHEN’s wife is of Russian descent and her father a leading property developer in Moscow.” (His wife left Ukraine as a child 40 years ago; her father is not any sort of property developer in Moscow, let alone a “leading” one.) The dossier alleges Cohen skulked to Prague with some associates “either in the last week of August or the first week of September.” (Cohen has paraded his passport to prove he made no such trip.) Cohen has since brought defamation suits against Fusion GPS and *BuzzFeed*.

It’s quite possible the FBI didn’t seek a FISA warrant on Cohen because they discovered, rather quickly, that the claims against Trump’s lawyer did not square with the available evidence. If so, kudos to the FBI for professionalism. On the other hand, if what was checkable in the dossier so readily proved false, why present Steele’s work to the FISA court as reliable and credible when it came to surveilling Carter Page?

Does the dossier still matter? Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-Rhode Island) told the *New Yorker* last week that “to impeach Steele’s dossier is to impeach Mueller’s investigation.” Which raises the question: Why is Sen. Whitehouse selling special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation so short?

If Mueller is half the professional he is advertised to be, he will look for provable facts, not the fancies peddled by Steele and his sources, such as they may be. The opposition researchers were paid to collect allegations damaging to team Trump; Mueller is charged with finding the truth. These are fundamentally different undertakings.

The dossier has launched investigations and lawsuits and thousands of arguments since its original publication. Rereading it now, in light of all that has subsequently come to pass, shows that the best summary of its contents is still the one *BuzzFeed* began with: The allegations remain unverified, and the report contains errors. And how. ♦



Fences help to define the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso.

A Border Ballad

The big lessons our reporter learned biking from San Diego to El Paso

BY GRANT WISHARD

On January 17, I dipped a wheel in the Pacific in San Diego and set out to bike along America's southern border. It was a six-week, 1,600-mile challenge, but on February 8 I fell off my bike in El Paso, doing my best impression, face to pavement, of a tire skidding to a stop. I fractured my elbow and have spent these last few weeks in a cast, facing down such herculean challenges as putting on a pair of socks and opening a bag of Doritos. It has at least left me ample time to ponder what I saw in northern Mexico.

The borderlands are unlike anywhere I'd ever been. "Beautiful" isn't the word you'd use to describe them. The landscape is harsh and often ugly, and the region is sparsely populated. But when you find people, you find energy and expectation, because anywhere people are allowed to cross from one side of the border to the other, business is booming. Even minuscule towns are turbocharged economic engines. Humble Nogales (pop. 220,000), for example, generated \$24 billion in trade last year. A gold rush is on in this wild, wild West.

I was lucky that three friends joined me for this part

of the trip, and their fluent Spanish allowed us to escape the tourist traps of Tijuana and Juárez—and all the border towns in between. We didn't have to stay in motels; people we met on the road invited us into their homes. We ate street food during the day and feasted in small family restaurants at night. I think we succeeded in stealing what every traveler is after—a slice of someone else's life. I also learned some things about our border and our southern neighbors that surprised me.

THEY LOVE AMERICANS—EXCEPT TRUMP

I thought my blond hair, blue eyes, and lack of Spanish beyond *gracias* and *por favor* would earn me derision. I was wrong. I was shown nothing but hospitality as I passed through border towns like Sonoyta, Agua Prieta, and Janos. Life here revolves around the imbalance between the United States and Mexico, yet nobody treated me like an interloper.

One of the first people we met with a story to tell about the border was Juan Luis Zargoza Montano, a handyman at the campground in La Rumorosa, a one-stoplight town located practically at the top of the Sierra de Juárez mountains. The town's name translates as "the one who tells rumors," in reference to the way the wind whispers and howls through the rocks. The mountain pass was jaw-droppingly beautiful—an utterly desolate moonscape.

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GRANT WISHARD / THE WEEKLY STANDARD

Back in the 1980s, Juan crossed the border illegally and spent 11 years picking apples in Washington state, eventually bringing his family over—wife, son, and daughter. One day, as Juan tells it, a drinking buddy beat him nearly to death and robbed him. When Juan later confronted him and tried to get his things back—his money, his and his wife’s wedding rings, and more—the man threatened to kill him. Juan was quicker on the draw and wounded his assailant with a shotgun, but ended up serving nearly 10 years in prison. He was deported upon release, of course, and a female ICE agent took the trouble to explain to him who makes the rules for men like him.

“What color is this piece of paper, Juan?” she asked, holding up an ordinary document.

“The paper is white, and the letters are black,” he answered.

“No,” she said, “the paper is black and the letters are white.”

Juan cannot legally cross the border and is too old to try to sneak over. His family stayed to work in the States, and he sees them just three days every three or four months. You’d think that he would have strong words for the United States. Instead he told me, “You guys got the door open right here. I see you guys as people. A person is a person. I don’t care if he’s white, black, Chinese.” Sappy, sure, but typical of how we were treated throughout the trip. These Mexicans are our nearest neighbors, and they see us as neighbors.

Most days, I was too busy washing my clothes in a sink and patching flats to follow the news. The State of the Union, the Super Bowl, and the Winter Olympics all escaped my notice. News of Trump, however, came through loud and clear. On the second day of the trip, Trump tweeted that Mexico is “now rated the number one most dangerous country in the world.” This made everyone mad. Mexico is a dangerous country, yes. It had 29,168 murders in 2017: 20.5 per 100,000 residents, which is high but still below that of the rate in countries like Brazil and Colombia. Much of the violence is tied to the drug trade, and the

Mexican government responded to Trump with a statement pointing out that violence down south is driven by the insatiable U.S. demand for drugs. And, no, it insisted, Mexicans are not going to pay for a wall as “a principle of national sovereignty and dignity.”

The Mexicans along the border return Trump’s antipathy in spades, but they didn’t blame the average American bike tourist for his statements. They equally see their president, and his ruling conservative party, as working mostly in the service of the United States. As Dolores, the restaurant owner who served us chicken *mole* in Mexicali, a border town in Baja California, asked me, “If you can’t trust the U.S. president and you can’t trust the Mexican president, who can you trust?”

THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO CROSS

One of the most interesting conversations I had on the trip came in Nogales, a town just south of Tucson. Andrea Valeria works part-time as a guide for the Border Community Alliance, an organization that tries to introduce Americans to the rich heritage of the borderlands. I’d arranged to meet her expecting to make polite chitchat about immigration issues. But she forcefully made the point that illegal immigration is a “cultural issue,” not a political one. Most illegal immigrants originate from the far south of Mexico or Central America, she explained, where the culture regards the high-risk journey itself as honorable. A family saves for years to pay a coyote to take its man across the border to work in the United States. Once there, earning in a day what he used to scrape together in a month, he sends a lot of money back home. These payments, known as *remesas*, are the bedrock of several Central American economies.

At a migrant shelter in Mexicali, we met a group of Hondurans who fit this profile perfectly. Their families had raised large amounts of money to get each of them across the border—for the coyote, but also for the bribes





Markers placed against the border barrier in Nogales recall those who died attempting to cross illegally. Andrea Valeria (below) sees this as a cultural issue rather than a political one.



that have to be paid to the cartels and the corrupt policemen along the way. They rode *La Bestia* (“the Beast”), the system of freight trains migrants jump to travel the grueling 3,000 miles north through Mexico. It was somewhere, they told us, on the Beast that the group lost two friends. They made the mistake of falling asleep and came down off the train, both losing legs. Regardless of the danger, these men were determined to continue. One swore to us, “If I die it will be crossing the border.”

Valeria hears such stories all the time. She knows there’s a better way to cross. Like all the members of her family, she maintains a visa that allows her to legally work in the United States and cross back and forth. When her visa expires every six months, she gets it renewed. No, they don’t pass these visas out to just anyone. And no, there aren’t enough every year for everyone who wants to get to the United States—in 2016 the Department of Homeland Security issued nearly 4 million visas for temporary workers and their families, while the Border Patrol captured 563,204 trying to cross illegally.

Living and working in a booming border town like Nogales and waiting for legal permission from the U.S. government, even if it takes years, is the best, easiest, and cheapest thing migrants can do for themselves, according to Valeria. Rent in a border town costs a tenth of what the coyotes and the cartel demand, and if you are caught illegally in the United States you forfeit the chance to ever receive a visa or citizenship status. Why not work legally while you wait? They’ll eventually call your number (expected wait time is between three and six months right now), and the company you work for can sponsor you for a visa at any time. Simple, right? Valeria called it the true American dream: Live in Mexico, Work in the United States.

She has seen this cultural misunderstanding at work in her travels. In Nogales, she doesn’t know anyone who would consider crossing illegally. But when she tells people further south that she lives on the border, they immediately want to know how she gets across. When she explains the power of her visa, they don’t believe her. “They would much rather go the hard way, in a dangerous way where your life is in jeopardy. Why? Because they’ve been doing it for generations.”

THOSE THAT CROSS DON’T PLAN TO STAY

Andrea Valeria is emblematic of another thing that became very clear as I rode along the border: Mexican immigrants actually prefer to live at home.

I read a lot of Peter Skerry in preparation for this trip. A political science professor at Boston College, Skerry has the unusual ability to discuss immigration issues without taking sides or beginning to froth at the mouth. One of his big arguments is that most immigrants do not plan to stay in this country and do not see citizenship as their primary goal. “Illegal immigrants,” he said in 2014, “who are overwhelmingly from the Latin countries to our south—Mexico and Central America—they don’t plan to stay here. They plan to come here, work hard, save money, send it home, buy themselves land, build themselves a house, and go back. That’s really hard for Americans to appreciate. They want to think that everyone comes here and is dying to be an American citizen. It ain’t necessarily so.”

As a patriotic American, I did find that hard to appreciate before my trip. I wanted illegal immigration to be all about high-minded ideals—truth, justice, and the American way. But the lure of the border is money, on both sides. We met two young Mexican women in Mexicali. Neither of them likes the city, and both would rather be back home in the south. But living on the border is necessary

IMAGES: GRANT WISHARD / THE WEEKLY STANDARD



Your intrepid correspondent and friends leaving Agua Prieta on the road to Janos

for the sake of their engineering careers, and they are well compensated for the inconvenience of living in Mexicali by a Mexican firm making airplane turbines for the U.S. market. Both women are in their late 20s with no family obligations, and they will eventually move back south, to the Mexico that feels like home. Northern Mexico isn't really Mexico, they explained to me. The culture is diluted by the close proximity of the United States, which pulls everything toward itself.

I saw this phenomenon at work in Juárez, the twin city to El Paso. The Rio Grande begins to define the border for the first time here, and it is further enforced by rows of fences, concrete moats, spotlights, and cameras. Our host Carlos briefly worked in the United States installing home computer systems, but he quickly moved back home to Juárez and doesn't plan to ever leave. I asked him why, and he said it wasn't something he could easily describe. He found life in the United States awkward and uncomfortable. I imagine he felt like I felt during my time in Mexico—constantly wondering what was going on. He is clearly happy where he is. Carlos has tattoos and piercings galore, and he's shaved his head except for a single long braid. He teaches a how-to class on graffiti and is working on an amateur rap career.

Between 2009 and 2014, the number of Mexican Americans who chose to move back to Mexico outpaced the number of Mexicans moving to the United States, according to a 2016 Pew study. While 870,000 people moved north, approximately 1 million people moved south. Sixty-one percent said they did so to reunite with family or start one of their own. Statistics can tell only part of the truth, especially when it comes to illegal immigration, but these numbers indicate that what motivates people to cross the border is complicated and changing.

RECKONING WITH TRUMP

With Trump as president, it's not hard to understand why, according to Pew, just 30 percent of Mexicans say they viewed the United States favorably in 2017, the lowest number since the study began in 2002. Just 55 percent now believe the country's economic ties to the United States are a good thing, down from 76 percent in 2009. Yet that bitterness wasn't much in evidence as I biked the border. Pew notes that within 200 miles of the dividing line, the number of Mexicans who view the United States favorably rises to 41 percent.

The country goes to the polls on July 1 and the relationship with the United States is already a big issue in the presidential race. The frontrunner right now is Andrés Manuel López Obrador, affectionately known as Amló, and he has promised to "put Trump in his place" if elected. Essentially a left-wing populist, he'd happily help Trump rip up NAFTA. He wants Mexico to turn to countries like China to create a more diverse range of trading partners—the country currently sends 80 percent of its exports to the United States. Mexico is the world's 11th-largest economy, and Amló thinks it high time for the country to emerge from under the shadow of its northern neighbor.

Radical candidates rarely win elections in Mexico, but many of the people I met are weary of the U.S. influence in the country. They don't care for Trump, but, ironically, many Mexicans who believe their own democracy to be corrupt see his 2016 victory as an encouraging sign. In a world where Trump can win, many wonder, why not Amló?

When I get this cast off in a couple of weeks, I'm jumping back on the bike to ride the Texas portion of the border, from El Paso to Brownsville. I suspect the world will look different from the other side of the fence. ♦



A Crisis of Liberalism?

And why there is still hope for the American experiment. BY ERIC COHEN

Since the birth of the modern age, conservatives of various stripes have lamented—often with good reason—the cultural decline of post-Enlightenment society. Such critiques have emphasized different defects: the shrinking of human beings to mere seekers of comfort; the loss of reverence for religious traditions and transcendent truths; the celebration of sexual license and the collapse of the family; the reduction of culture to trivial entertainment; a new despair that life is disenchanting and meaningless (a “joyless quest for joy,” as Leo Strauss once put it) or the mass illusion that our dehumanized

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Why Liberalism Failed

by Patrick J. Deneen
Yale, 225 pp., \$30

lives are better than they really are.

The most honest critics of modernity do not casually dismiss its remarkable achievements in agriculture, transportation, medicine, and domestic comfort. They don't simply gloss over the starvation, drudgery, and disease that afflicted premodern life, or ignore the injustices and indignities of the premodern political order. The old days were not always so good, when mothers and children died regularly in childbirth, when members of some races and religions were treated as second-class citizens (or worse), and when

mundane chores like washing dishes and cleaning clothes could be life-dominating. But some conservative critics believe that the price of progress has been too high; they challenge us to imagine something deeper, higher, and truer in human existence that can be recovered and renewed from the wreckage and wasteland of modernity.

Why Liberalism Failed, by University of Notre Dame political theorist Patrick Deneen, is yet another addition to the literature of conservative lament, hitting notes that any reader of T.S. Eliot or Russell Kirk or Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn would surely recognize. Deneen's critique of—and often assault on—modern liberalism goes right to the foundations. His target is not simply the progressive liberalism of Barack

DAVID MCNEW / GETTY

Obama but the social contract theory of John Locke; not the liberationist legacy of the 1960s but the vision of radical human autonomy advanced by John Stuart Mill; not the adverse consequences of modern industrialization but the Baconian view that man is at war with nature in the quest for survival and comfort.

Deneen certainly takes aim at the most progressive version of San Francisco liberalism, which now uses the political powers of the state and the cultural powers of the media to expand the empire of sexual freedom. But he gives equal weight to the forms of cultural disintegration caused by Silicon Valley capitalism, with its vision of the free, wealth-producing individual whose waves of “creative destruction” undermine inherited places, cultures, and traditions. Left and right alike, according to Deneen, are variants of the modern liberalism that has “failed.” And left and right together have led us into the cultural crisis that we now face in modern democracies around the world.

Liberalism is arguably the most confusing word in the English political vocabulary. At the risk of oversimplifying, the original purpose of the liberal project was to redefine the role of government as the protection of individual rights: the right to secure and exchange property, the right to practice one’s chosen religion or no religion at all, the right to criticize those in power in a free and open press, and the right to form associations and communities in accordance with one’s own beliefs and purposes. The “classical liberals”—from Locke to Smith to Madison—believed that the possibility of living a reasonably decent life was inhibited by despotic modes of government, inefficient economic systems, and ineffectual technologies. They imagined something better—a “social contract” that protected individuals from both tyrannical kings and tyrannical majorities and that harnessed the motivating force of private self-interest toward a more prosperous, more stable, and more comfortable way of life.

Some classical liberals believed that this political order would also liber-

ate great-souled men and women for the pursuit of excellence, since newly freed individuals would rise as far as their talents and energies would take them, instead of living under the constraints of religious law or within the rigid social hierarchies of their birth. Other liberals recognized that the heights of man’s artistic, theological, or intellectual reach might diminish in liberal societies that focused on commercial pursuits and practical

Deneen does not deny that liberalism has achieved many of its desired aims, especially the creation of wealth and the unshackling of religious norms that once constrained the varieties of human experience. But he believes that the liberal idea of human nature—and especially the liberal idea of freedom—is a perversion of the real truth about who we are as human beings.

knowledge, and yet they believed that advancing human equality by securing universal human rights was worth the cultural price. And the most morally self-confident liberals believed that liberal democracy was now the only legitimate political regime and that it was the duty of liberals to export their ideas around the world.

Deneen does not deny that liberalism has achieved many of its desired aims, especially the creation of wealth and the unshackling of religious norms that once constrained the varieties of human experience. But he believes that the liberal idea of human nature—and especially the liberal idea of freedom—

is a perversion of the real truth about who we are as human beings. We are not simply autonomous individuals; we are members of distinctive families, communities, and nations. We are not simply free to choose who we are and how we live; our identities are limited by webs of inherited obligations that give life meaning and purpose.

According to Deneen, the liberal vision blinded us to the anthropological truth that we live among the generations, with duties to both our ancestors and our descendants. Liberalism is a Lockean lie that worked. But human nature is finally getting its revenge, as evidenced by the cultural depravations all around us, from collapsing birth-rates to ecological deterioration, from broken communities plagued by opioid addiction to massive governmental and personal debt, from tween sexting to the collapse of liberal education.

So why have we failed to diagnose the deeper cause of our current problems? Deneen focuses on two connected reasons. The first is that the political and cultural wars between left and right obscure the fact that progressives and conservatives alike accept the liberal understanding of human freedom as “expressive individualism.” They treat each other as mortal enemies, and yet they are both engaged in advancing an “anti-culture” that tells young men and women that liberation is their only birthright. As Deneen describes it:

The ways in which the individualist philosophy of classical liberalism and the statist philosophy of progressive liberalism end up reinforcing each other often go undetected. Although conservative liberals claim to defend not only a free market but family values and federalism, the only part of the conservative agenda that has been continuously and successfully implemented during their recent political ascendancy is economic liberalism, including deregulation, globalization, and the protection of titanic economic inequalities. And while progressive liberals claim to advance a shared sense of national destiny and solidarity that should decrease the advance of an individualist economy and reduce income inequality, the only part of the left’s political agenda that has triumphed has been the

project of personal and especially sexual autonomy. Is it mere coincidence that both parties, despite their claims to be locked in a political death grip, mutually advance the cause of liberal autonomy and inequality?

According to Deneen, individualism and statism thus go hand in hand. Classical liberals may lament the rise of “big government” but they fail to recognize that big-government liberalism was the inevitable consequence of individualism’s triumph: Only the “welfare state” could provide the safety net that families and local charities once provided, and only the “therapeutic



Patrick J. Deneen

state” could attempt to ameliorate the spiritual void once organically filled by faith-based communities. Conversely, progressive liberals may still believe that they are agents of toleration—of a live-and-let-live ethos—but they have become anticultural policemen who permit no dissent from (for example) the new sexual morality.

Which leads to the second reason for our self-deception: The victors in modern liberal society—the “new aristocracy,” as Deneen calls them—are the ones reaping the greatest personal benefits from liberalism while leaving the worst cultural wreckage to those whose economic, moral, and metaphysical lives are far more fragile. The new aristocrats can enjoy unlimited sexual adventures through their twenties and then settle down in stable marriages, with therapists, nannies, and life coaches on call to make it all work. The new aristocrats can move around from one city to the next, one job to another,

since they are “networked” beyond the old boundaries of place. But this cosmopolitan (or *Cosmopolitan*) way of life is unavailable—or undesirable—for the majority of men and women, who yearn for economic stability, moral order, and a clear set of cultural expectations to guide and restrain them. When this cultural script breaks down—and when the dynamism of the modern economy sweeps aside established patterns of life—we get the dysfunctions of what Charles Murray called “Fishtown”: broken marriages, irresponsible men, insecure women, and poorly raised children.

We have now reached the point, according to Deneen, when ordinary citizens are ready to revolt against the liberal order: citizens whose lives are often in turmoil, whose faith in leaders and institutions (“the establishment”) is shattered, who feel like their voices are not heard even as the administrative state tries to minister to their every need. Yet this new revolt against liberalism is illiberal and debased. Or as Deneen describes it, liberalism ends in Trumpism:

We should finally not be surprised that even a degraded citizenry will throw off the enlightened shackles of a liberal order, particularly as the very successes of that order generate the pathologies of a citizenry that finds itself powerless before forces of government, economy, technology, and globalizing forces. Yet once degraded, such a citizenry would be unlikely to insist upon Tocquevillian self-command; its response would predictably take the form of inarticulate cries for a strongman to rein in the power of a distant and ungovernable state and market. Liberalism itself seems likely to generate demotic demands for an illiberal autocrat who promises to protect the people against the vagaries of liberalism itself. Liberals are right to fear this eventuality, but persist in willful obliviousness of their own complicity in the birth of the illiberal progeny of the liberal order itself.

Deneen’s alternative to the false hope of Trumpism is the renewal of communal life at the local level: true religious communities that worship together, celebrate together, mourn together, and stay together; local markets that resist

the demands of the global economy; local self-governance focused on the concrete problems of towns and neighborhoods; and a renewed sense of local responsibility, which should inspire the most capable young men and women to devote their talents to where they grew up rather than fleeing into the cosmopolitan never-never land. Out of this post-liberal experience of localism, Deneen hopes that a new theory of politics will emerge from the ground up and that the era of liberalism will come to an end.

There is much to admire in Deneen’s book, which combines impressive learning in the history of political theory and genuine attention to the complex realities of contemporary life. And the cultural and political problems that worry him should worry all of us. But the book is also deeply flawed, and in the end its critique lacks the prudence, realism, and generosity of spirit that wiser cultural critics—like Irving Kristol and Leon Kass—have demonstrated in their own deep efforts to confront the problems of modernity.

For one thing, Deneen treats American society as if it is simply a Lockean (or Madisonian) abstraction. For a book that celebrates the importance of particular peoples—with histories and heroes, stories and songs, rituals and traditions—it is remarkable how little attention Deneen pays to the real American story. Yes, liberal ideas informed the American founding; and yes, modern American culture evinces many of the degradations of advanced liberal society that Deneen so ably observes. But Deneen’s cold abstraction is not the American story. We are a nation that remembers (or could be reminded of) the cracked bell in Philadelphia emblazoned with a passage from Leviticus; Washington’s heroic crossing of the Delaware; Hawthorne’s mythic house of the seven gables on the waters of Salem; Lincoln’s log-cabin origins and soul-shaping rhetoric; the huddled masses entering through Ellis Island; the Jewish woman whose poetry adorns our Statue of Liberty and the rabbi who arrived as an American chaplain when Hitler’s concentration camps were

MATT CASHORE / UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

finally liberated by American force of arms. To reduce America to mere liberalism is a crime against memory being committed by a thinker whose aim is to elevate our memories and our attachments. And to reduce modern Americans to small and selfish men is to ignore the selfless citizens—especially in the American military—who see America as a story of freedom, not simply an abstract idea of freedom. And that distinction, entirely missed by Deneen, makes quite a difference.

Likewise, Deneen demonstrates too little gratitude for the genuine moral achievements of American modernity—and too little appreciation for the pathos of premodern men and women who suffered in mortal nakedness when blind nature was stingy or cruel. Surely Deneen is correct that the will to progress can become a dangerous and deforming human illusion: the belief that man can conquer the world, once and for all, including the problems of human misery and mortality. Such hubris can only lead to self-delusion and self-destruction. But the will to progress is also, at its best, an embodiment of the higher possibilities of the human spirit: creativity, wonder, persistence, charity. Yes, modern technology is oriented toward the practical needs of bodily life, as Bacon envisioned it. But the scientific spirit still yearns to know the truth, and ameliorating the bodily needs of life includes the ultimate act of charity: the physician-scientist who rescues a sick child from a now-avoidable death sentence. Deneen makes clear that he does not seek a return to the past, and he does not romanticize the premodern age. But for a thinker who puts gratitude at the center of his philosophical anthropology, Deneen's level of gratitude for modernity itself is perhaps a bit too stingy.

Finally, Deneen pays little attention to the harsher necessities of modernity that cannot be avoided and no attention to the threats we face from our most zealous and committed enemies. For all their flaws, America and the other liberal societies of the world are generally redeemable places, worthy of defense. They may be decadent,

but they are not evil. And the defense of America and its allies requires tremendous power: military power, economic power, and political power. America has a moral responsibility to be powerful, and the preservation of American power requires competitive success in the modern economic and geopolitical world. This may be harsh and unpleasant; living well as a nation with such competitive pressures may partially diminish the very lives that the perpetuation of such power exists

For all their flaws, America and the other liberal societies of the world are generally redeemable places, worthy of defense. They may be decadent, but they are not evil. And the defense of America and its allies requires tremendous power—military, economic, and political.

to protect. But this is reality—a reality that Deneen never quite confronts. And because he ignores it, he is able to engage in cavalier attacks on modern capitalism and cavalier calls for opting out of the global economy. Many wise and decent parents recognize that participating in the modern economy is the price of feeding, clothing, and healing their children, just as many modern nations—like America and Israel—recognize that succeeding in the modern economy is the price of preserving their imperfect forms of civilization against the threat of well-armed barbarism.

In his desire to offer an evenhanded critique of liberalism—holding right and left equally accountable for our cultural decline—Deneen perhaps misses an opportunity to contribute to the renewal of a realistic version of Burkean

conservatism, which he rightly seeks and which this era sorely needs. At a policy level, such an effort might explore in greater detail what a reinvigorated federalism could look like, making the argument that both civic peace and civic renewal require allowing California to be California and Utah to be Utah, with each region given more space to embody its distinctive visions of the social good. He might have combined a new defense of federalism on matters of domestic and cultural life with a new defense of noble nationalism when it comes to projecting American power in the world.

Or even closer to Deneen's heart, he might have explored, concretely rather than abstractly, what the renewal of communal life could really look like: what it would mean to strengthen and sustain Catholic schools in Indiana, or to educate a new generation of evangelical pastors, or to preserve traditional Jewish schools and synagogues in blue states like California and New York, where the costs are high and the surrounding culture is increasingly hostile. He might have developed his case "from the bottom up"—putting a spotlight on civic heroes, like Eva Moskowitz, who has created the most successful charter-school system in the nation, all to educate the underprivileged kids who are being left behind by the very dysfunctional progressive liberalism that Deneen describes.

One cannot fault Deneen for writing a work of political philosophy, which inevitably tends to abstraction. But if he takes his own philosophy seriously, his next book will enter into the nitty-gritty of some aspect of the cultural renewal that he seeks. He will discuss real institutions and real people. He will elevate civic heroes, not simply attack the wayward masses and decadent elites. And if he takes the spirit of gratitude seriously, then he may find ways to honor and redeem the architects of modernity for the human goods they brought into being, even as he seeks to remedy their original anthropological sin: giving too much weight to the myth of the self-made self and paying too little attention to the web of human attachments that ought to define us. ♦

Boomerang Effect

Missionaries evangelized abroad and then helped transform America. BY JOHN WILSON

David Hollinger's new book, *Protestants Abroad*, is a comedy of unintended consequences, the thesis of which is a joke—a serious joke, a very intellectual joke, but funny, with a sting. It goes like this: “The Protestant foreign missionary project expected to make the world look more like the United States. Instead, it made the United States look more like the world.”

Those are the first two sentences of Hollinger's first chapter. By the end of that first page, he's adduced the “boomerang” thesis put forward by Buell G. Gallagher in 1946: “The ‘gospel of inclusive brotherhood’ preached by the missionaries ... flew back like a boomerang to the hands of those who had flung it outward, carrying on its return trip an awareness of the provincialism of its original construction.” The returning boomerang, thunking earnest American Christians in the back of the head, “was laden with an indictment of ‘cultural imperialism and arrogant paternalism’ and a plea for a more genuinely universal human community.” (Much further along, Hollinger notes that the book in which Gallagher formulated the “boomerang” thesis, *Color and Conscience*, was “one of the most penetrating critiques of racism written in the 1940s.”)

A good joke often includes a twist. Quoting Walter Russell Mead's observation that “the multicultural and relativistic thinking so characteristic of the United States today owes much of its social power to the unexpected consequences of American missions abroad,” and further drawing on the testimony of W.E.B. Du Bois and Nadine Gordi-

John Wilson edited Books & Culture from its founding in 1995 until its closure in 2016.

Protestants Abroad
How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America
by David A. Hollinger
Princeton, 390 pp., \$35

mer, Hollinger rebukes enlightened critics of “the missionary project” (critics who share his own passionately held “cosmopolitan” values) for their lack of nuance, their tendency to caricature.

In fact, Hollinger contends, firsthand experience with people in China, India, the Middle East, and other foreign lands changed the missionaries themselves more than the “heathen” they had gone to convert. “They brought their changed selves and their foreign-influenced children back to the United States,” spreading the gospel of cosmopolitanism in many different spheres of American public life. “Even as I finish *Protestants Abroad*,” he writes in his preface, “I remain surprised that such an important aspect of modern American history has not received more sustained scrutiny until now.”

The book consists of a series of thematic chapters that flesh out Hollinger's thesis, including many biographical sketches. These are mostly of missionary children—in chapter 2, for instance, Henry Luce, Pearl Buck, and John Hersey. Some of the figures Hollinger treats (like these three) are familiar, though they haven't typically been discussed in this context; others will be unknown to most readers. Among the subjects are “Anticolonialism vs. Zionism” (chapter 5), “Telling the Truth About the Two Chinas” (chapter 7), and “Of One Blood: Joining the Civil Rights Struggle at Home” (chapter 11), which also mentions unmarried women with missionary

affiliations who quietly maintained same-sex relationships.

Hollinger's book will be read, cited, and argued with for years to come. Many of its most engaged readers will be people like myself, with missionary connections, who are deeply interested in the story he has to tell yet who find their shared experience only intermittently reflected in his narrative.

That sense of dislocation begins before the book has even been opened. There are hundreds of millions of Christians spread across Africa, Asia, Latin America, Oceania. Some of these were Christian long before the coming of the modern missionary movement. Many who have become Christian more recently have been converted by indigenous churches. But from the 19th century to the present, the impact of missionaries has been enormous, and many of those missionaries have been American Protestants. Clearly, both for better and for worse, they did change the world; Hollinger's distinctive contribution is to show aspects of that influence at home. To acknowledge the one is not to deny the other. Why then the subtitle asserting the opposite? Just a bit of hype? No, because (as we've seen) Hollinger doubles down on this assertion in the first sentences of his first chapter.

Early on, Hollinger makes it clear that he is focusing on one of the two primary “families” of American Protestantism, “shaped by what came to be called the ‘mainline’ or ‘ecumenical’ denominations that controlled the spiritual capital of American Protestantism through the 1960s.” These are the Protestants Hollinger is talking about when he refers again and again to “the missionary project.” The other Protestant “family” comprised evangelical, fundamentalist, and Pentecostal groups. Hollinger acknowledges that a “study of foreign missions as such—rather than a study like this one, of their impact on American public life—would have much more to say about the evangelical family, which has maintained a robust missionary project all the way down to the present.”

This is an important qualifier, which

some reviewers of *Protestants Abroad*, alas, have failed to note. (John Kaag, reviewing the book for the *Wall Street Journal*, describes it as a “comprehensive history of American Protestant missionaries abroad.”) But it is also a bit misleading. In fact, even as you take in Hollinger’s explanation for focusing on the “missionary-connected men and women” who went to “Amherst, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Oberlin, Princeton, Swarthmore, and Yale”—hence positioned to be influencers—rather than those who went to “Bob Jones, Calvin, Mercer, Westmont [from which I graduated, by the way], Wheaton,” etc., it may occur to you that by largely excluding evangelical missionaries and their children from his account, Hollinger is excluding evidence that would complicate his thesis. *Protestants Abroad* is not simply a study of the impact of mainline Protestant missions on American public life; it is the latest in a loosely linked series of books in which Hollinger has recounted and celebrated the rise of cosmopolitanism and the decline of “sectarian” convictions, especially Christian convictions.

Let us stipulate, whatever our convictions, that the history of American Protestant missions, like the history of the world, like the history of any single human life, is a tangled affair. Shortly after the end of World War I, my grandmother, then in her mid-30s, traveled by ship to China to serve as a missionary in Shanghai. She was a staunch Baptist, but she wasn’t sponsored by a denominational ministry, nor was she with the China Inland Mission; rather, she was sent by a small independent agency.

When she graduated from high school in 1904, she wasn’t contemplating the mission field. She wanted to go on to college; her dream was to become an architect. Her father (a small-town banker in southern Illinois) ridiculed this ambition. She had three siblings: two brothers and a sister, with whom she was particularly close. Both brothers went to college; the eldest became a very successful business executive in New York and Texas, eventually president of a corporation, while the younger

brother became a lawyer in California. Her beloved sister died in childbirth.

After living at home for a few years, my grandmother went to Moody Bible Institute, and following graduation she began working as a city missionary in Aurora, about 40 miles west of Chicago. Scholars would probably describe her as an evangelical (if not as a fundamentalist), but, contrary to what

Yes, yes, of course, much took place in the global missions encounter that was independent of the motives of individual actors. But in Aurora as much as in Shanghai, she was convinced of the pervasive reality of sin and the healing presence of Christ.

Briefly recounting the life of the Methodist missionary and missions administrator Ruth Harris, who became



American missionaries holding a Sunday service in Papua New Guinea

we are told about that period, she saw no conflict between “social work” and spreading the gospel. The two went hand in hand. Such were the convictions of A. T. Pierson, one of the prime movers of evangelical missions in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. (See Dana Robert’s splendid biography, *Occupy Until I Come: A. T. Pierson and the Evangelization of the World*.) Many of the people in Grandma’s patch were immigrants, and one of the hardest parts of her job, she told me and my younger brother when we were boys in the 1950s, was persuading men who worked long hours (often in miserable conditions) to go home to their families when they were done instead of heading for a saloon. (I wish I could go back in time for a minute to witness such an encounter.)

When she went as a missionary to China after that stint in Aurora, she certainly wasn’t motivated by a desire to make the Chinese “more American.”

“an exceptionally important antiracist organizer” in the United States, Hollinger describes

the shock of “human suffering and degradation” [Harris] encountered in Shanghai when she arrived in 1947. She was quickly overwhelmed by the abject poverty, the appalling cruelty of the labor system, and “the bundles neatly wrapped in straw mats” along the street—“dead babies, placed there by their families to be taken away.”

That is just how my grandmother described her first impressions of Shanghai when she arrived more than 25 years earlier.

In China, she met a fellow missionary, a widower with a young boy; his wife had died in the influenza epidemic. They married and had two children, the elder of whom was my mother, born in 1922. My mother lived in Shanghai until she was 11 years old. (I was not yet 11 myself when she said

to me, for the first but not only time, “I hope the Lord doesn’t call you to be a missionary.”)

The notions intertwined with missions, especially of the evangelical variety, were (and still are) potent, and as such peculiarly vulnerable to manipulation. (See, for example, the excellent memoir by Amy Peterson, *Dangerous Territory: My Misguided Quest to Save the World*.) Consider my grandfather telling my grandmother—the family having returned to America, then in the depths of the Great Depression—that God was now “calling” him to serve as an itinerant evangelist. And off he went to do the Lord’s work, leaving Grandma to maintain and support the household and care for the children.

It was almost 20 years later when Grandma moved in with my mother and my brother and me in Southern California, and she lived with us for the rest of her life. (I was 5 years old; my parents had just divorced.) There were all sorts of Chinese artifacts in the house, and now and then she would open the battered steamer trunk she’d taken on voyages to China and back. Preserved among its contents were meticulous houseplans from decades earlier and delicately colored drawings of imagined interiors.

Missionaries from hither and yon often spoke at church, typically at the Sunday night service, often attired in the garb of the country where they were based. And a steady flow of missionary friends came to visit—some retired, some on furlough. Almost none of them had been in China, but they were part of an informal network of evangelical missionaries worldwide, from Ecuador to Korea, from the Congo to the Philippines. At every church we attended in those years, there was a map of the world with colored pins or other markers showing the places where missionaries supported at least in part by our congregation were serving.

These visitors to our house, like the missionaries and their children brought to life in Hollinger’s biographical sketches, had all been immersed in cultures very different

from those they were familiar with in America. They were quite a varied bunch, resistant to stereotypes. Some of them were very critical of American society, broadly construed, others not. Some of them said they felt the people they were working with were closer than Americans are to the world of the Bible. Many related instances of miracles, demonic powers at work, and the like; others not at all.

I thought about these long-ago encounters, in which I listened closely to the “grownups” talking, as I read *Protestants Abroad*. Hollinger begins his preface by remarking, “No, I am not part of a missionary family. It is usually the first question people ask when they learn what I am working on.” But at the end of the preface, he writes, “I did grow up in a Protestant social setting in which missionaries were important characters,” and he recalls, as I have, a series of houseguests. “I did not then fully understand what special cultural beings missionaries were,” he concludes. “But every word and gesture of the missionaries, over the dinner table and at church events, alerted me that there was a wider world beyond the small-town America of my experience.”

That’s a lovely note from a scholar whose outlook is very different from that of the Christian community in which he was raised. For my own part, I don’t think of missionaries as “special cultural beings,” perhaps because they have never not been active presences in my life, but I do share Hollinger’s sense that missions and missionaries have helped to open my eyes to “a wider world.”

And they continue to do so. A couple of years ago, as a magazine editor, I assigned for review a book about African Pentecostals in Italy. The reviewer was Philip Jenkins, whose own book *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* alerted general readers to the explosive growth of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and other regions outside Europe (where churchgoing and the wider cultural influence of the faith have declined precipitously) and North America (where the decline, although not so steep, has nevertheless

been significant). In Colorado or Massachusetts you may bump into missionaries from South Korea.

Hollinger, of course, is not unaware of these developments, which he treats only in passing in *Protestants Abroad* (in what is the single least persuasive passage in the entire book): “Were the constructions of Christianity developed in the Global South, with all their variations drawn on local traditions, really part of a single community of faith with the Protestants of the North American West? This was a dangerous question for church leaders.” Really? Wouldn’t the reality outlined by Philip Jenkins, by the great missiologist Andrew Walls (quoted by Hollinger with patronizing asides), and many other observers be much trickier for Hollinger himself?

The denomination that my wife and I belong to, the Evangelical Covenant church, has its roots in Sweden and the Pietist movement in Europe. During the relatively brief period of sustained immigration from Sweden to the United States in the late-19th century, an American offshoot of the Swedish denomination was founded. The first foreign missionary venture of this fledgling denomination, in 1890, was to China.

In the century and more since then, the home church in Sweden has dwindled greatly. The ECC in the United States is a small denomination by American standards but reasonably healthy. A few years ago, our local congregation heard a visiting speaker on the ferment among Christians in China—including ambitious plans (despite many barriers) to send Chinese missionaries to other parts of the world. Along the way, she related stories of miracles that reminded me of the visiting missionaries when I was a boy.

I listened with mixed feelings. It takes time to separate the wheat from the chaff, and God works in mysterious ways. Maybe in 50 years, Chinese missionaries will come to Chicago, as my grandmother once went to Shanghai. Maybe the boomerang effect Hollinger describes with such zest is not the end of the story. That would be a different sort of comedy. ♦

The Engineer-President

Herbert Hoover's rise and fall.

BY ALONZO L. HAMBY

The Herbert Hoover of historical memory is a distant person, mostly recalled as the president who presided ineffectually over the early years of the Great Depression. Kenneth Whyte's fine full-life biography reminds us that Hoover was himself a man of action and a remarkable American success story. Charles Rappleye provides an authoritative account of his presidency.

Born to Quaker parents in 1874 in the small town of West Branch, Iowa, Hoover was orphaned at the age of 9 and sent off to live with relatives in Oregon. He did not attend high school—he worked and took business-related night classes—but at 17, he left his foster home for Palo Alto, California, where he worked his way through Stanford University, majoring in mining engineering and becoming a student leader.

Employed after graduation by Bewick, Moreing, an international mining company, he managed mines in Australia, California, and China. Along the way, he married his college sweetheart, Lou Henry. The couple experienced the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and were besieged in Tientsin before being rescued by the international force that put down the insurgency. The experience, Whyte believes, left Hoover convinced that Asians responded only to force.

By his mid-thirties, he was a managing partner of Moering, based in London. He had achieved consider-

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Hoover
An Extraordinary Life in Extraordinary Times
by Kenneth Whyte
Knopf, 728 pp., \$35

Herbert Hoover in the White House
The Ordeal of the Presidency
by Charles Rappleye
Simon & Schuster, 554 pp., \$32.50



Head of the U.S. Food Administration, 1917

able wealth and, Whyte writes, “used work, reading, and ceaseless activity to keep from being trapped alone with his thoughts and emotions.” Retiring from Moering and remaining in London, he became an independent mining consultant. The venture supported a large townhouse, servants, and governesses for his children. “The engi-

neer,” he believed, had emerged as a new social type with special responsibilities. By then a major donor to Stanford University, he may have aspired to its presidency.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 transformed Hoover's life. Working with U.S. diplomats, he helped organize transportation home for stranded U.S. citizens. Then he turned his attention to Belgium. The Germans, ignoring a declaration of neutrality, had used the country as a highway into France. Expropriating Belgian agricultural production to feed their army, the invaders created an artificial famine. Hoover established a relief program that provided almost the entire food supply for seven and a half million Belgians. He got grudging assent from Britain and Germany, raised the money, oversaw the effort, and made himself an internationally renowned figure.

When the United States entered the war in 1917, he returned to his country to assume leadership of the Food Administration, which mobilized American agricultural production. Linking food conservation to wartime patriotism, he galvanized an effort that did much to feed the Allies as the war went into its decisive phase. The effort, Whyte believes, “was progressivism incarnate,” employing the regulatory power of government for the good of humanity. The end of the war and the postwar peace conference at Versailles brought him back to a ravaged Europe on the verge of mass famine. Hoover, British prime minister David Lloyd George declared, became “food dictator to the world.” Acting on his own authority, he distributed relief to former enemy nations as well as the Allies. John Maynard Keynes thought him one of the most admirable figures at Versailles, but his bluntness irritated President Woodrow Wilson and marginalized him.

Admirers promoted him for the presidency, but he declined to make a serious bid, instead campaigning for Warren G. Harding in 1920. After Harding won a sweeping victory, he made Hoover the secretary of commerce. Hoover served in the post for seven and a half years with distinction, making the Commerce Department

PHOTOQUEST / GETTY

“both a producer and a clearinghouse of relevant information on the U.S. economy.” When the nation experienced a sharp but brief postwar recession, he convened a conference on unemployment that he invited to consider the then-daring idea of counter-cyclical public works—that is, increasing rather than reducing government spending on infrastructure during the economic downturn. Under Harding and then Calvin Coolidge, Hoover became the strongman of the cabinet. His projects ranged from flood control and hydroelectrical power to the regulation of commercial radio and civil aviation. Along the way, he authored *American Individualism*, a well-received attempt to reconcile rugged individualism with social order. By 1928, he was the inevitable Republican nominee for president. He defeated Democrat Alfred E. Smith in a landslide.

The stock market crash and onset of the Great Depression came midway through Hoover’s first year in office. Like most politicians and economists, he was slow to grasp its importance. A Federal Farm Board, established to support agricultural prices, was overwhelmed by the depth of their collapse. The industrial economy declined apace, creating mass unemployment. Many Republican politicians supported an increase in tariff rates as a barrier against cheap imports. The result, the strongly protectionist Smoot-Hawley bill, raised rates sharply. A thousand economists signed a petition demanding a veto. Hoover privately described the bill as “vicious, extortionist, and obnoxious”—but signed it. He could not, Charles Rappleye tells us, “turn his back on a measure endorsed by a clear majority of his own party.”

Rather activist by previous standards in dealing with the economic crisis, he accepted an Agricultural Marketing Act that sought to support farm prices by dumping surpluses overseas. He also tried to speed up public works projects, but these moves had little success. As the economy continued to decline, banks collapsed and homeless workers panhandled on the streets of large cities. Hoover, determined to go no further,

vetoed bills to establish a larger federal public works, provide agricultural subsidies, and make early payment of a federal bonus for World War I veterans. The Republicans took a drubbing in the midterm elections of 1930. By 1932, homeless workers in many cities were calling their makeshift shantytowns Hoovervilles. The president waged a hopeless campaign for reelection against Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Politically, Hoover never recovered from his 1932 defeat. The Republican party moved on to Alf Landon, Wendell Willkie, Thomas E. Dewey, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. But as politi-

cal memory of the Depression waned, Hoover experienced a revival of sorts as the head of a commission on government efficiency under Harry Truman. Establishing an office and living quarters at New York’s Waldorf-Astoria hotel, he spoke occasionally on current issues and in time became a respected Republican elder statesman. Widely eulogized at his death in 1964, Hoover’s life demonstrated the reality of the cherished American faith in opportunity and upward mobility, and his career suggested both the possibilities and ultimate limitations of technocratic governance. ♦

BCA

Curling Is Cool, Fool

Watching Team USA take the gold in the quadrennially popular sport. BY KELLY JANE TORRANCE

Being a writer-editor-pundit in Donald Trump’s Washington is a 24/7 job. In the last year, I’ve had countless nights of missed dinners and lost sleep, along with a few canceled concerts and ruined respites. But there was one mission from which not even a Trump tweet starting a nuclear war could keep me: I flew 18,000 miles to watch Olympic curling. Really.

Admittedly, the trip would have had me well placed if war did break out. The 2018 Olympic Winter Games were held in Pyeongchang (the outdoor events) and Gangneung (the indoor events), South Korea, a couple of hours east of Seoul by car. Gangneung is just 70 miles from the border with North Korea, whose supreme leader, Kim Jong-un, battled President Trump in a Twitter war of words last year until realizing he could win over the credulous Western media with a “charm offensive” by send-

ing his Bond-villain-worthy sister to what the South absurdly dubbed the “Peace Olympics.” It was Gangneung, whose arena hosted the curling match at which I saw history made, that ended up supplying the central mystery of this year’s Winter Games. No, not what happened to the North Korean cheerleader who mistakenly applauded for American ice skaters, but: Why would anyone need to dope to compete in curling? (Perhaps Russia supplies banned substances in all its athletes’ drinking water.)

Curling, after all, is the only winter Olympic sport that looks like something in which your grandpa could compete—if he could figure out how exactly it works. That’s the mysterious romance of curling, which makes it, every four years, simply irresistible to Americans.

Part of curling’s charm is that it might be the only sport left in the games that honors the original Olympic ideal of the amateur athlete. The Eastern bloc’s state-sponsored full-time “amateurs” during the Cold War, increasingly lucrative sponsorships, and the participation of, for example,

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the NHL's professional hockey players all radically changed the character of the competition. But one doesn't have to commit to eight-hour days in the gym to become an Olympian curler; strategy is more important than strength. The men of Team USA curling all have day jobs: John Shuster, the skip, and Tyler George are salesmen (for sporting goods and liquor, respectively and fittingly), Matt Hamilton is an R&D technician, and John Landsteiner is a corrosion engineer.

"What is a skip?" you might ask. Curling has a vocabulary all its own. Think of the skip as the team captain; this player is in charge of strategy and typically throws the final stone, also called a rock—which is made of granite from the small island of Ailsa Craig, just off the coast of Scotland. (Talk about mysterious and romantic!) The house is the area at the end of the ice sheet at which players aim their stones; the button is the bull's-eye in its center. After one of the four players departs from the starting line—the hacks—and throws the rock, the skip calls out instructions for two other players to brush with a broom the area ahead of the stone, changing its path by changing the friction between stone and ice. Those instructions include such shouts as "Hard!" "Hurry!" "Hurry hard!" and "Die!" The delightful "bonspiel" is the term for a curling tournament.

You can see why Mr. T, the actor and former wrestler best known for the 1980s television series *The A-Team*, tweeted throughout the Pyeongchang Olympics with the hashtag #curlingis-coolfool. ("I predict PAIN for Sweden and victory for the USA! Yeah that's what i'm talking about," he wrote in one prescient tweet. "We're in it to win it fool!")

Curling, traditionally a competition of cold climates, is becoming a cross-continent craze. "It's ridiculous," laughed Australian Josh Saunders,

who said he only agreed to accompany American Ashley Johnson to the Olympics when she agreed to catch some curling. The pair live in China and caught my eye with their costumes: Saunders had on a kangaroo suit, while Johnson was comfy in a Chicago Cubs onesie in the colors of Team USA. "It's fun and addicting to watch. It draws you in," Johnson said of curling. They



John Landsteiner, left, and Matt Hamilton of Team USA on their way to a gold medal in South Korea, February 24

planned to see a single curling match; they ended up going to three. "We've been learning it as we go along for the past two days."

Thanks to their hosting duties, the Koreans learned it, too. "This is a new sport for us," noted Sue, my South Korean guide on a trip to the demilitarized zone, as we watched the women's gold match on the tour bus television set the next day. They were a quick study: This marked the first time the country competed in curling, and the women's team took home the silver. "I thought it was funny," Sue said of her first impressions of the sport. "It's something you could play at home."

Well, only if you're from Scotland, where the game was invented some five centuries ago, or Canada, which has dominated since the game became an official Olympic sport in 1998. I was born in the latter and most of my ancestors hail from the former, so I looked forward to knitting my Canada

2018 hat, with curling stones surrounding the brim, as I watched my countrymen go for the gold. Imagine my surprise when I touched down in Seoul to discover that Canada, though it had won the gold in mixed doubles, hadn't even placed in either the men's or women's tournaments. (You must realize that the country takes its curling seriously. After pictures spread of Shawn Germain double-fisting beers at 9 A.M. as he watched his wife, Rachel Homan, compete, he explained on Twitter that it was his way of dealing with the stress: "I'm not a drunk, I'm just Canadian.")

My consolation prize, though, was an even more exciting game: I got to watch Team USA win its first-ever gold medal in curling. Hearing "The Star-Spangled Banner" play at the medal ceremony after the competition had me a little choked up. I recorded a video of the scene—complete with a huge crowd of Americans chanting "U-S-A!"—and uploaded it to social

media to share the moment with my friends and family stateside. The games don't value such enthusiastic promotion from fans, however: I soon received a Facebook notice informing me that "International Olympic Committee Rights Management blocked your video because it may contain content they own."

So I didn't bother capturing video highlights of the game that followed, the women's bronze match, though it was every bit as boisterous. Japan defeated Great Britain, 5-3, with masterful moves and crazed calls from both teams. Most entertaining, however, were a couple of blokes in kilts who must have snuck in some of their nation's eponymous whisky. They sang indistinguishably and yelled out, though to no avail, taunts like "You can run, but you can't slide!" Curling might be romancing fans in every hemisphere, but its creators still have a lock on its distinctive trash talk. ♦

"The Trump administration is considering an offer from Republican mega-donor Sheldon Adelson to pay for at least part of a new U.S. embassy in Jerusalem, four U.S. officials told The Associated Press."
—Associated Press, February 23, 2018

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Adelson to finance Jerusalem embassy

**WAITING FOR VISA?
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Complex includes hotel, eateries, casino, OTB

BY NICK SANTORO

During a White House press briefing, Las Vegas mogul Sheldon Adelson unveiled his plans for the new U.S. embassy in Jerusalem. The 60-story high-rise overlooking the Old City includes a luxury hotel, casino, spa, six restaurants, two nightclubs, and a themed shopping mall. The theme is the Middle East.

"These folks work very hard," said Adelson, referring to the embassy staff. "So what better way to end the day than at the Canyon Ranch Spa Club? Exfoliate that dead skin with a Dead Sea body scrub!" The business magnate noted that all members of the foreign service would receive a discount, provided they show proper I.D. or a Sands Player's Club card.

"Our ambassador can host dignitaries at Emeril's kosher steakhouse and take in our terrific new Baz Luhrmann show,



BIGSTOCK

An architect's rendering of the new embassy's proposed 'Peace Talks Table' that also hosts video poker

'Baz—A Musical Mash-up,'" said Adelson. After the show, he suggested guests get to "really" know each other at one of the nightclubs featuring \$4,000 bottle service. "I believe any peace deal can be achieved in such an intimate atmosphere." The two dance clubs are named Sultry and Moisture.

Aside from one-shekel slots, craps, blackjack, poker, and baccarat, the new embassy will also feature a sports book and off-track betting. "You want to wager on leadership change in Iran? We've

got odds for that," said Adelson.

"The new embassy is like a piece of Las Vegas in the Middle East," said President Donald Trump. "It'll make Dubai look like Atlantic City by comparison, I can assure you." The president plans on attending the grand opening in May. "We are going to knock Mr. Trump's socks off," promised Steve Wynn, the newly named food and beverage

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the weekly
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